Ann Arbor Observer

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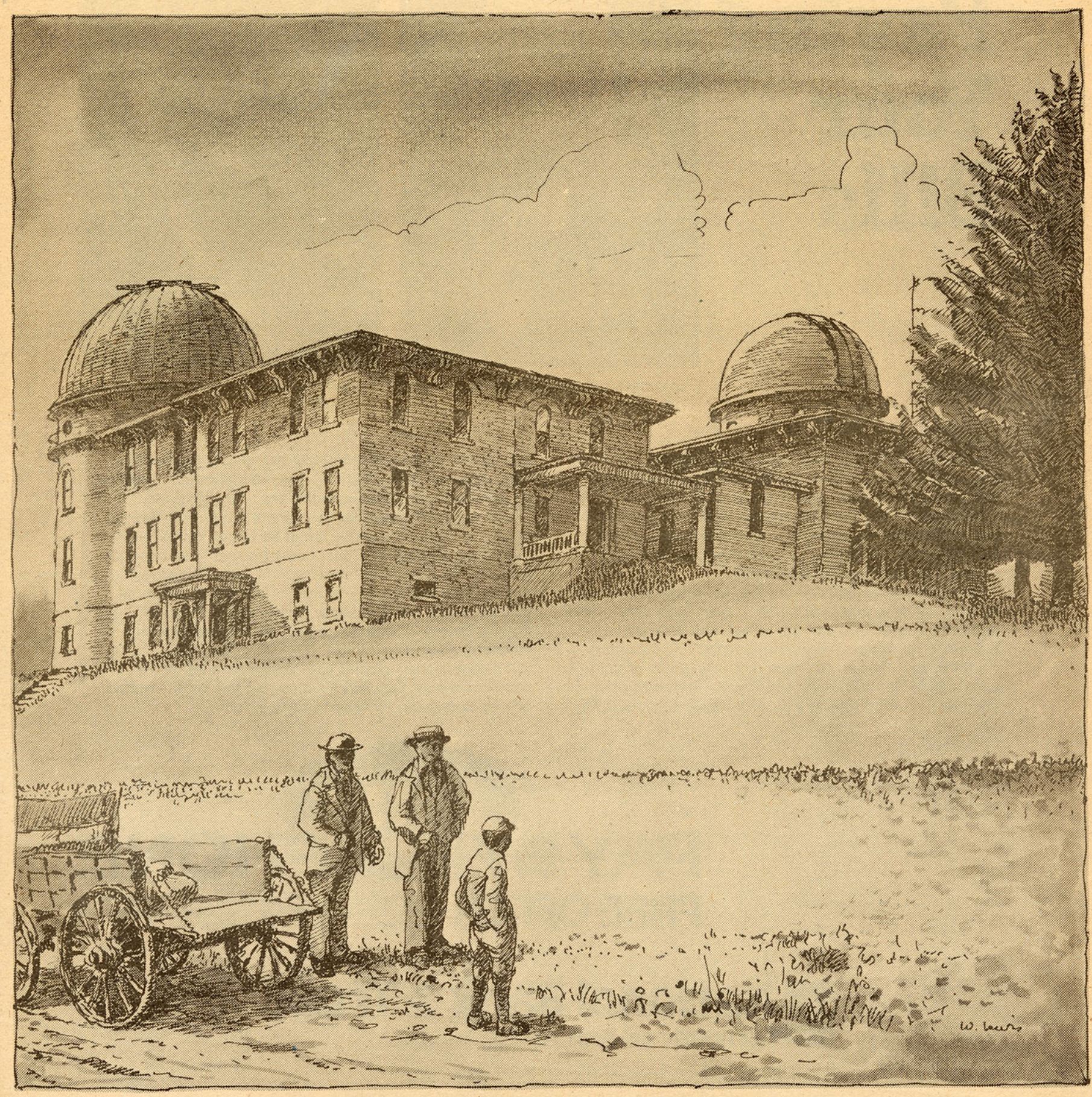

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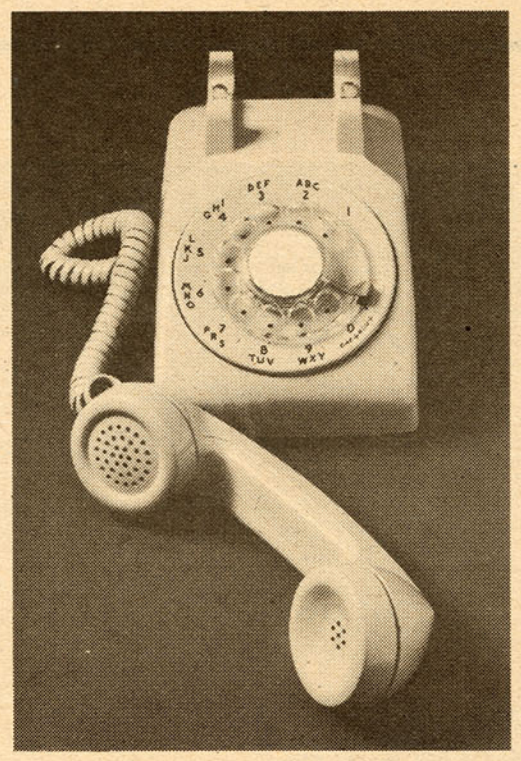

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Is Dial-a-Ride Worth It?

Door-to-door bus service is more expensive and wasteful than traditional fixed-line coach service. Why then should it receive such large government subsidies?

DIAL-A-RIDE: it's just about as close as city bus systems can come to simulating the convenience of the auto. You can call an AATA dispatcher, say where you are going and when, and the dispatcher sends a van to your door. The cab-like service of Dial-a-Ride is a calculated attempt to convert citizens to using public transit instead of the private automobile. Although Dial-a-Ride is significantly more expensive than traditional line bus systems, its proponents see it as an important tool in the mounting campaign to get more people to use public transit, a campaign that is being financed by local, state, and federal tax money.

Public transit in Ann Arbor receives a massive government subsidy. Fares pay only 11% of the $5 million annual AATA budget. The rationale for the subsidy is rooted in the desire to discourage private auto trips. The number of autos on American roads continues to grow, so the problems autos are already causing are likely only to get worse. Those problems are:

- inefficient use of our dwindling oil resources (buses are a more energy-efficient means of transportation than cars)
- environmental pollution from auto exhausts
- overcrowding of downtown streets and parking facilities
- traffic congestion, which increases travel time, wastes gasoline, makes pedestrian travel less pleasant, and necessitates costly and aesthetically unattractive street widenings.

Public transit's strongest supporters tend to be the people most concerned about the many problems for society that autos create. Ann Arbor has an unusually high number of citizens who support public transit. A recent $80,000 survey by the Institute for Social Research of over one thousand Ann Arborites found:

- 92.1% think our public transit system in Ann Arbor, already one of the most (if not *the* most) expensive for a city of Ann Arbor's size in the country, should be "improved so it will be used more"
- when asked how important public transportation is for Ann Arbor, 0.3% said "not at all important," 1.0% said "not very important," 9.5% said "somewhat important," and *89.2%* said "very important"
- 84% said they thought public transit ought to be used to conserve fuel
- 80% said they would vote for the 2.5 mill public transit property tax if it were again put on the ballot.

There's a striking contrast, however, between the number of apparently ardent supporters of public transit in Ann Arbor and the number who actually use it. The same ISR survey shows that only 15% of those surveyed used the bus system ten times or more in the last thirty days. Almost 70% don't use public transit at all. The finding that the vast majority of Ann Arborites use the bus system only occasionally if ever underlines the basic marketing problem of public transit in America: it's very difficult for a bus system even with Dial-a-Ride to compete in convenience with the auto—especially in a small city like Ann Arbor with a large percentage of car owners.

One way public transit can favorably compete with the auto is with fares. Using massive tax supports to keep bus fares artificially low ($.35 a ride), it is a lot more economical to use the bus system than to buy a first or second car. But even when Ann Arborites are presented with an attractive and cheap service like Dial-a-Ride, they still by and large choose the more expensive and convenient automobile. Of all the vehicle trips made in Ann Arbor in a given day, only about 5% are made with public transportation.

If Ann Arbor's public transportation system is going to provide major social benefits expected of it—energy conservation, reduction of congestion and pollution—it is going to have to be able to carry a lot more people, particularly people going to and from work during the peak traffic times of morning and late afternoon. These two periods (roughly 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. and 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.) account for a substantial percentage of all auto trips in Ann Arbor during weekdays. These are also the periods when street congestion is at its height.

The need for greater use of public transit in Ann Arbor gets to the heart of the problem with Dial-a-Ride. One thing that has clearly emerged from Ann Arbor's seven-year experience with Dial-a-Ride is that it is not a practical system for carrying large numbers of people. Even strong Dial-a-Ride supporters concede that it would be prohibitively expensive, even with AATA's big budget, for Ann Arbor's Dial-a-Ride vans to handle considerably greater numbers of riders than they handle today. If substantial future growth occurs in Ann Arbor's public transit ridership, most of those additional riders will have to use the conventional system of bus coaches running on a system of fixed-route bus lines. Thus the future role of Dial-a-Ride in Ann Arbor is at best a "background" service for use during periods of low ridership demand. Line coaches alone will carry an increasing majority of riders.

What, then, was the point of Dial-a-Ride in the first place? Was Dial-a-Ride *ever* a good way to meet the transit needs of healthy people in a city the size of Ann Arbor? (Most people agree that Dial-a-Ride is a good way of transporting the handicapped and elderly with walking difficulties.)

DIAL-A-RIDE certainly seemed like a good idea back in 1973 when voters had a chance to decide whether they wanted to pay an extra 2.5 mills in property taxes to fund public transportation in the city. This 2.5 mills represents one of the highest local taxes for public transportation in the country. Most observers were surprised when the 1973 millage proposal passed by the impressive margin of 61% to 39%. This margin is somewhat less surprising when one takes into account the inflated claims made by Dial-a-Ride supporters during the campaign. In a full page *Ann Arbor News* ad just before the election, citizens were told the following:

> Under the proposed system, a person would call the TELTRAN number to initiate service. He would tell the dispatcher his address and destination. Within minutes, a minibus would arrive at his doorstep. If his destination was within the same zone, he would be driven there on the bus that picked him up. If the destination was in another zone, he would be taken to a transfer point and subsequently driven to his destination. . . . One phone call handles all, and trips are completed within 30-35 minutes of that call. Anywhere in the city.

The ad went on to extoll the social benefits of Dial-a-Ride: less pollution and congestion, and more help for downtown parking.

In a similar vein, an *Ann Arbor News* editorial just before the election enthusiastically supported the millage proposal, claiming:

> TELTRAN means for Ann Arbor as a whole less congestion, a reduction in auto fumes, and quite possibly a more pedestrian/shopper oriented downtown. . . . It sounds almost too good to be true: door-to-door service, just ring up the dispatcher and say where you want to be picked up, where you want to go and when you want to arrive there. The dispatcher tells you when to expect your ride. . . . No mess, no fuss, no hassle. From living room to destination, no more than half an hour will have elapsed.

It *was* too good to be true—especially the claimed half hour time between call and trip completion. In reality, it is not uncommon for a trip to be completed in 45 minutes to an hour.

Not only is Dial-a-Ride a much less expeditious transit service than was portrayed, but the social benefits said to be derived from the system (less congestion, pollution, wasted energy) are benefits Dial-a-Ride can much less readily provide than a conventional line bus system.

In a nutshell, the problem with Dial-a-Ride is that it is a very expensive, energy intensive means of transporting people compared with conventional line coach systems used by most cities. Door-to-door service means it takes more vehicles to service a given area than it would take with a fixed-line system. From 75% to 80% of a bus system's budget goes to pay for personnel. Drivers are paid over $6 an hour to make time-consuming trips picking up and dropping off customers. Dial-a-Ride manpower costs account for a major share of the cost difference between Ann Arbor's and other Michigan cities' bus systems. And the difference in cost between Dial-a-Ride and a conventional total line-bus system increases with the number of riders there are to service. If you have one hundred riders along a line, all demanding to be picked up at their homes, the cost of Dial-a-Ride is much higher than it would be to run a conventional bus line through the neighborhood. When demand for Dial-a-Ride services keeps increasing, requiring the addition of more and more vans to pick up and deposit customers, there comes a time when even a community with as large a transportation budget as Ann Arbor has to draw a line.

Because major social benefits public transportation is supposed to provide are based on the capability of transporting large numbers of people, there seems to be an inherent contradiction between the characteristics of a Dial-a-Ride system and the benefits expected of the system. Dial-a-Ride advocates have an answer to this paradox. They say that when the demand for Dial-a-Ride in a given area grows to a sufficient level, you simply run a bus line through the area and encourage people to walk a few blocks to catch it. In other words, you introduce the standard line service.

But if most people who want to use public transit are eventually going to have to use a line coach system anyway, what is the point of introducing the costly Dial-a-Ride

About the Cover

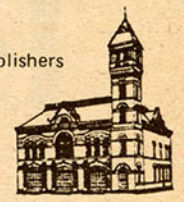
The Detroit Observatory (so called because funds for it came mainly from Detroit businessmen) was completed in 1854. It was then the finest observatory in the nation and the capstone of President Tappan's efforts to transform The University of Michigan from a provincial institution into a major research center. The observatory's 12½ inch refractor telescope, still in place, was the largest built in the United States at the time. In the 1860's and 1870's James Craig Watson used it to discover twenty-two asteroids. By the 20th century, however, the telescope was comparatively small. In 1911 a new wing was added to house a 37½ inch telescope. That wing was torn down in 1976.

Painter and U-M art school dean dean Bill Lewis made this pen-and-ink drawing (enriched with a watercolor wash) from a composite of several photographs.

Ann Arbor Observer

Don Hunt and **Mary Hunt,** Publishers and Editors

Susan Morales, Advertising Coordinator



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service in the first place? The answer to that, supporters of Dial-a-Ride say, is that this door-to-door personalized service is in large part a "marketing tool." They view the system in the context of the dwindling bus ridership in America since World War Two. In Ann Arbor in 1946, some 1,4000,000 rides were made on buses a year, although the population then was only 40,000. By 1954, the annual ridership was down to 700,000, as more and more people were able to afford autos. By the late 1960's, ridership levels were so low that private bus companies could not operate at a profit. So in 1968 the city took over the public transportation responsibility and formed the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority (AATA), directed by a city council-appointed board of directors.

By the late 1960's transportation experts were wondering if anyting could induce affluent Americans to take the bus instead of using their cars. Dial-a-Ride appeared to many to be one way of effectively competing with the car. The steady growth of AATA ridership since Dial-a-Ride began can be seen as a vindication of this prediction. But is it really? Towns like Kalamazoo and Lansing, with much smaller transportation budgets, have been growing faster in ridership using conventional coach lines than has Ann Arbor with Dial-a-Ride. Granted, Ann Arbor, with its relatively affluent population and sprawling neighborhoods, is not an easy town in which to attract riders. But it is quite possible that nearly as many Ann Arborites would ride a well-run line bus system as are now using the mixed Dial-a-Ride/line system in Ann Arbor.

Ann Arbor Public Transit Compared

Location	Vehicle Miles	Number Passengers	Total Operating Costs	Cost per Passenger	Subsidy per Passenger
Ann Arbor	772,325	742,782	$1,414,409	$1.90	$1.61
Battle Creek	140,613	279,091	$202,950	$0.73	$0.58
Flint	324,642	949,091	$576,945	$0.61	$0.28
Grand Rapids	550,429	877,665	$668,200	$0.76	$0.28
Kalamazoo	312,200	640,188	$425,531	$0.66	$0.49
Lansing	484,102	937,569	$854,478	$0.91	$0.73

This is a comparison of the ridership and costs of public transit systems in Ann Arbor and five other Michigan cities for the period October 1 to December 31, 1977, as reported by the state's Bureau of Urban and Public Transportation. Of the six cities, Ann Arbor has the highest ridership per capita. But Ann Arbor also has the longest service hours which, along with the more expensive Dial-a-Ride service, causes the Ann Arbor system to cost much more than the other systems.

If AATA is going to provide social benefits normally associated with public transit, it is going to have to be far more effective in attracting people riding to and from work. A large percentage of Ann Arbor trips are made during the two peak traffic periods caused by people going to and from work. Streets are most congested during these peak times, and the same cars which are clogging the streets also take up valuable parking space downtown.

Yet only a small percentage of Ann Arborites use public transit to go to work—less than 10% according to the ISR survey. A major reason for this low percentage is Ann Arbor's size. When a person can drive to work in 15 minutes, as most Ann Arborites can, the extra ten or so minutes it takes to use public transportation looms large in the user's mind and tends to outweigh the economy of not using the auto.

Nonetheless, many who are concerned with downtown parking and congestion problems think AATA could be doing a better job handling work ride customers. Take, for example, the experience of one large downtown business with over 200 employees. The manager of this business tried to encourage employees to take the bus by paying half their fare, so they only had to pay $5 a month for an unlimited bus pass. This manager got 40 people to try the bus to go to and from work, but within weeks, this number had dwindled to eight. This manager's analysis: "It just didn't seem that the system was designed to accommodate our employees. People thought it took too much time and wasn't flexible enough" Another central area store owner says she can't hire people who depend on public transportation to get to work because they're too often late.

Dial-a-Ride is clearly not the preferred method of handling work trips. It is a system suited for low-demand periods, not the peaks generated by thousands of people going to and from work in concentrated periods. Moreover, Dial-a-Ride is more time-consuming for

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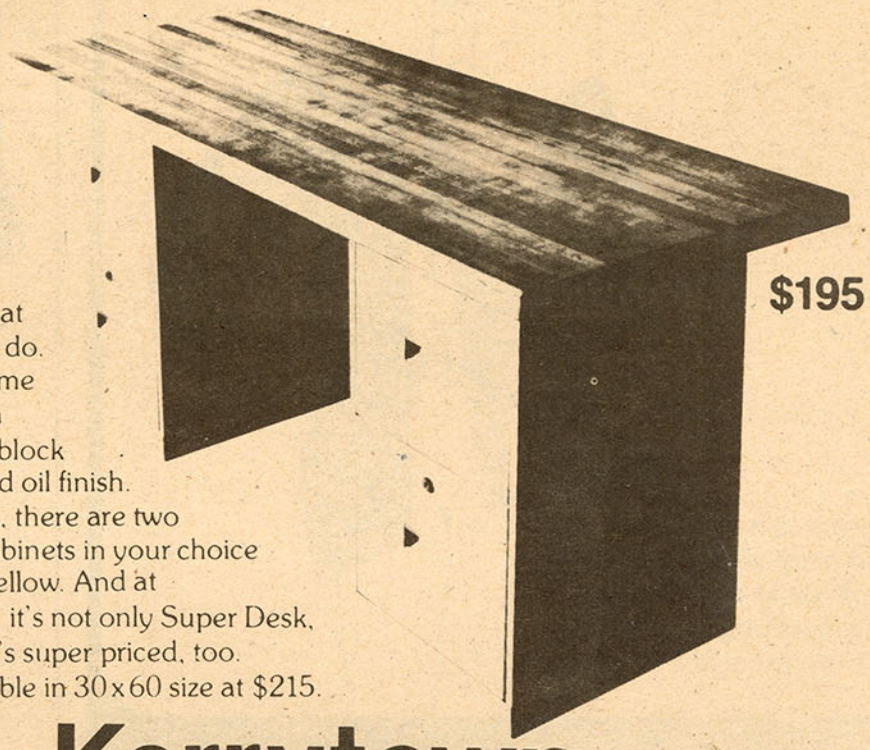

$195

At last, a desk that works as hard as you do. The top is a handsome 24x60 inch oak butcher block with a hand-rubbed oil finish. Underneath, there are two letter-size file cabinets in your choice of white or yellow. And at only $195, it's not only Super Desk, it's super priced, too. Available in 30x60 size at $215.

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most riders than directly taking a line bus. Dial-a-Ride is also inevitably less dependable than line travel, because it represents an extra link in the journey. Trip time and dependability are the key factors in attracting (or repelling) regular riders going to and from work.

Dial-a-Ride supporters recognize this type of service is not geared to handle the high volume work trips, but still hope such a system is a good introduction for many to public transit, thereby making it easier for such users to decide to use the line coaches during peak periods of public transit use. But it is questionable how well Dial-a-Ride works as a "marketing tool" to get people to use the bus system, with the expectation that they will then change to the line system. It's a little like offering someone a delux service with the hope that this will get them to use a standard service. Where line coach service has been introduced by AATA into heavily used Dial-a-Ride zones, the results have not been encouraging.

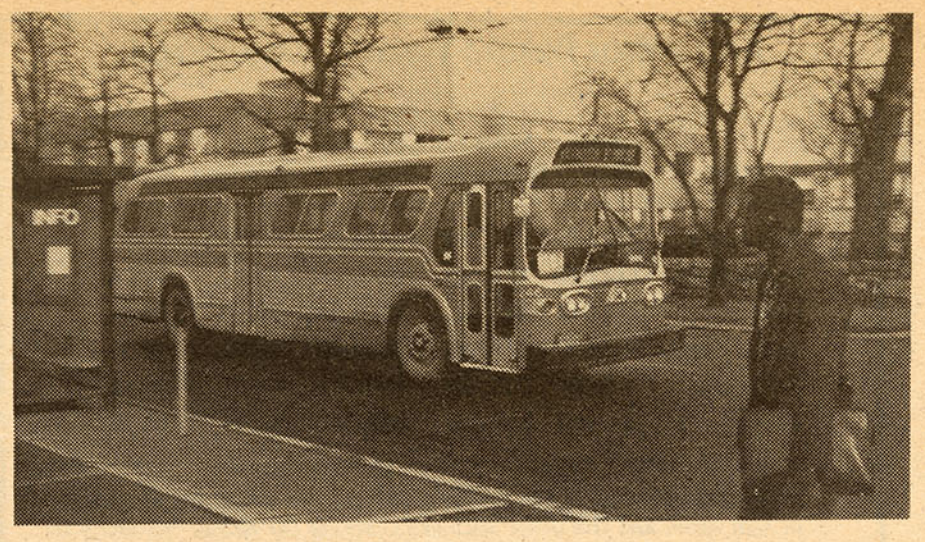
Another surprising problem with Dial-a-Ride: despite its supporters' early claims to save energy and reduce pollution and congestion, it actually turns out to be contrary to the ecological concerns of the pro-public transit public. Bus systems are supposed to save gasoline compared with how much gas would be used if every rider took an automobile. But the fuel consumption economy of Dial-a-Ride service is not good. One careful study of three Dial-a-Ride systems in three small upper Michigan towns concluded:

> In typical installations . . . Dial-a-Ride does not save fuel. To the contrary, the introduction of Dial-a-Ride into test communities in Michigan has resulted in a net increase in fuel used for transportation. The principal reasons for this are inducement of trips which would not have been made without the new service, a low average number of passengers per vehicle, circuity of routing, poor vehicle fuel economy, and diversion of passengers from more energy-efficient modes.

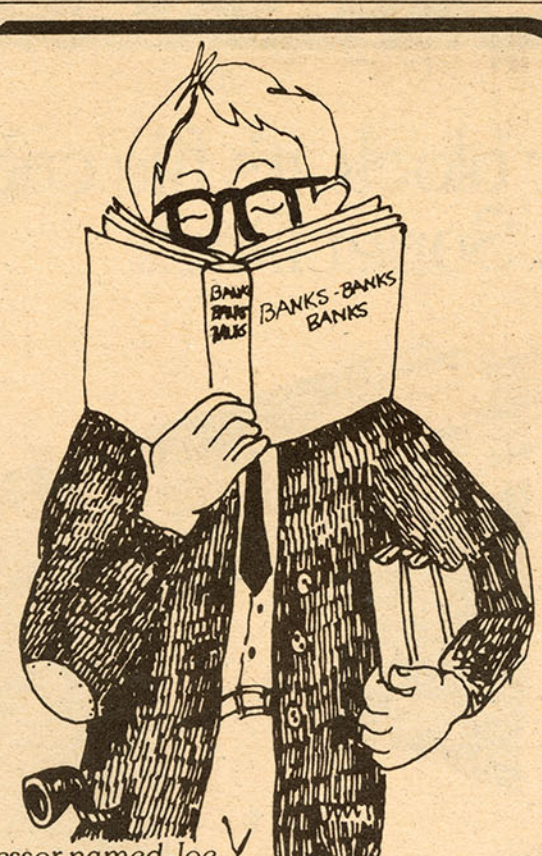
It is probable that Dial-a-Ride actually *discourages* walking and bicycling—both quite efficient transportation modes in a small city like Ann Arbor. All things considered, it's hard to see what the ecological value of the Dial-a-Ride system is.

There is finally a broader question about the social utility of Dial-a-Ride from a state and national perspective. Dial-a-Ride costs considerably more than a conventional line bus system. Part of what pays this added expense is the hefty transportation millage paid by Ann Arbor property owners. But another significant share of AATA's budget (46%) is paid by the state and federal governments, which must by law match local public transportation funding. What this means is that Ann Arbor, a relatively affluent community, receives a lot more money per capita from state and federal sources to run its public transit system than do less affluent communities such as Jackson and Saginaw—cities one would think need *more*, not less assistance for its citizens than Ann Arbor. It hardly makes sense from a state and national perspective to pour tax dollars into Ann Arbor's relatively luxurious Dial-a-Ride system when many towns lack even an adequate line haul system. •

Next month: Dial-a-Ride expert and former AATA board chairman Michael Berla will defend Ann Arbor's Dial-a-Ride system.



The unglamorous bus: although it holds almost three times as many passengers as a Dial-a-Ride van, the standard bus coach costs little if any more to operate than a van.



There was a professor named Joe,
Who wanted so badly to know:
"If all banks are the same,
Why does only one name,
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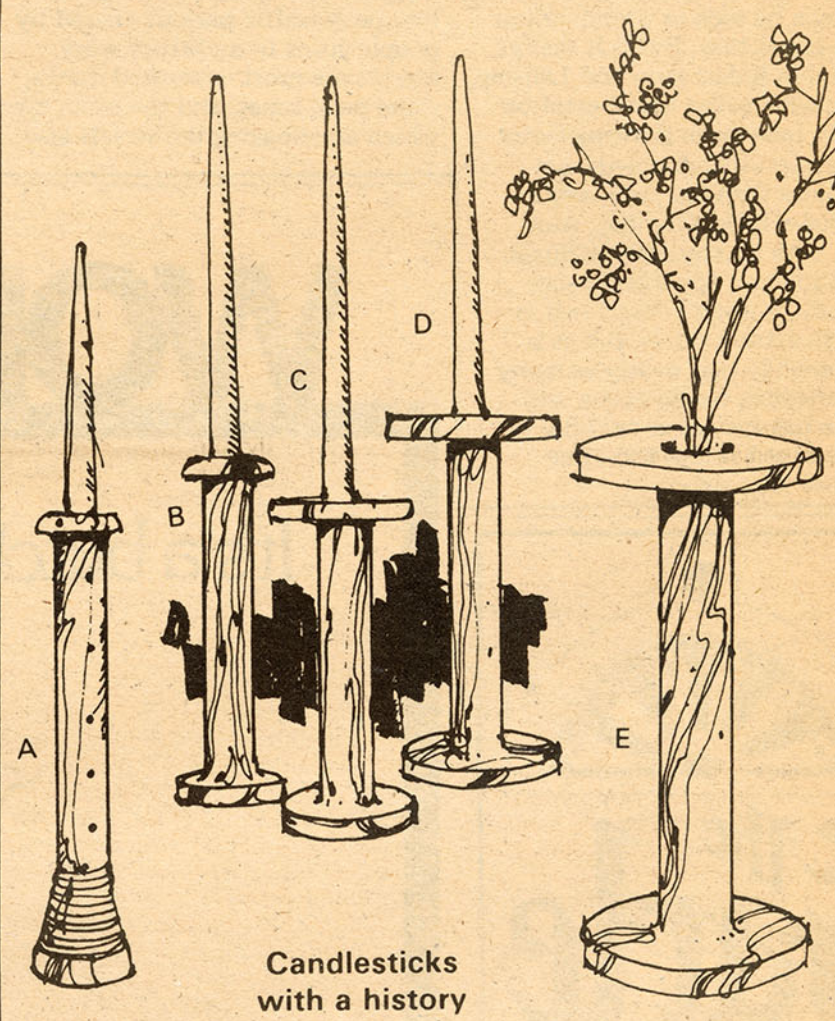

Candlesticks with a history

These wooden candlesticks that were once wool spools could spin a tale of New England as it was a half-century ago. Among the last of the original spools and bobbins used in the woolen mills, these hardwood decorative accents were hand assembled. . .each having made miles of yarn, with the lanolin in the wool giving them a lovely finish. A. Fluted maple with brass band, 10"H, $**6**. B. Brass-banded bobbin, 8"H, $**5**. C. Classic hard mapie spool, 11"H, $**7**. D.12"H showpiece, $**9**. E. Maple heavy-duty spool, 16"H. $**20**.

Jacobson's

Ann Arbor Items

Property Assessments Keep Going Up

City assessors have again completed their annual review of property assessments in Ann Arbor and are busy tallying how much more the city can expect from its property tax in the coming year.

With homes in Ann Arbor appreciating at a rate of 8% to 12% a year, a home which hasn't been reassessed for the past two years could cause a substantial increase in property taxes for its owner after this year's review. It isn't uncommon for a house selling at $40,000 three years ago to be worth $50,000 today. With Ann Arbor property taxes now approximately 71 mills, a $10,000 increase in market value means an added $355 a year in property taxes, for a total of $1775 in city, county, and school taxes.

City assessors review every home in town at least every three years, but some are reviewed within two years if the properties in that area are selling for as much as 20% higher than the most recent assessments.

This past year, 9,100 of the city's 18,700 owner-occupied residences were reviewed. Their assessments were upped a total of $31,000,000, or an average of $3407 a home. (Keep in mind that properties are assessed at half their market value.)

In general, homes whose prices have been going up fastest during the past couple of years have been in the lower cost range—those that sold for $25,000 to $35,000 in 1975. Such homes, if they have not already crossed the $40,000 line, are approaching it quickly. •

Old County Jail Still Needed?

After the county decided to build a new $10 million jail out in Pittsfield Township, a number of uses have been suggested for the site of the old jail at Main and Ann Streets. Some have suggested that the old brick structure be razed and used for surface parking. Others think the site might be a good place for a parking structure. Still others believe this land could be best used for a multifunction complex, including shops, offices, and apartments.

But if current trends in the number being sent to jail continue, it would appear that the county seriously underestimated the prisoner capacity required for the expensive new jail. It was made to house 208 inmates, but the recent inmate population has risen to within a couple of dozen of that figure and is getting higher. So it now looks as if the county may still need the old jail as a backup, and its demolition now may be delayed.

The higher number of inmates appears to go against the significantly lower number of serious crimes in Washtenaw County (444 fewer felonies in 1977 than in 1976). The reason seems to be that both prosecutors and judges are getting tougher on habitual criminals, and a higher percentage are now being locked up than in recent years. •

How to Use Vacant Upper Stories Downtown

With the acute shortage of central area housing, it's tempting to look at the existing downtown buildings with upper story space presently vacant or used for storage. Such buildings have the potential for around 120 apartments between William and Ann, from First to Division, according to an Ann Arbor Tomorrow inventory. Converting such space into housing can seem too complicated for building owners, what with building codes and the barrier-free design ordinance. To help property owners and investors decide whether investing in upper-story conversion projects makes sense, Ann Arbor Tomorrow is presenting a workshop April 19 from 1 to 5 pm. Architect Terry Alexander will talk about housing potential and compliance with building codes. A panel including City Assessor Wayne Johnson will discuss the tax implications of renovations. Financing, private and federal, will be covered by Ken Haist of Great Lakes (formerly Ann Arbor) Federal Savings and Loan and Barry Tillman of the city Community Development office. To reserve a place, call Ann Arbor Tomorrow at 665-0621. •

Ann Arbor's Biggest Factory

The city of Ann Arbor would be in pretty good shape if it could tax its largest manufacturing firm: The University of Michigan. The U-M leads the country in producing the top of the educational line: the PhD. From 1973 to 1976, 2,894 PhDs were awarded by the U-M, an average of two a day, every day of the year.

Closing in on Michigan's reputation as the most prolific PhD mill in the country is Ohio State, which awarded 2,675 PhDs in the same period. Next in line were Indiana (2,370), Harvard (2,350), New York University (2,322), UCLA (2,122), and Columbia (2,012). •

Federal Program That Built Firehouse Criticised

The federal program that recently financed Ann Arbor's new $2 million firehouse on Fifth Avenue has been criticized as counterproductive by U-M Professor Edward Gramlich in testimony before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Relations. The local public works program was designed to stimulate the economy by paying 100% of construction projects which local governments proved they could start work on quickly.

Ann Arbor already had been planning on building a new firehouse, and therefore city officials were able to submit promptly an application convincingly showing the need for the facillty. Other Michigan communities also submitted applications to Washington, but Ann Arbor was the only Michigan city to get a piece of the $4 billion pie in 1977.

Gramlich pointed out that the effect of the program was to keep many cities waiting to start construction projects until they got word of whether federal money would pay for it. This delay in construction was just what the program was designed to reduce. Gramlich's recommendation for how best to stimulate the national economy: "plain old federal personal income tax cuts." •

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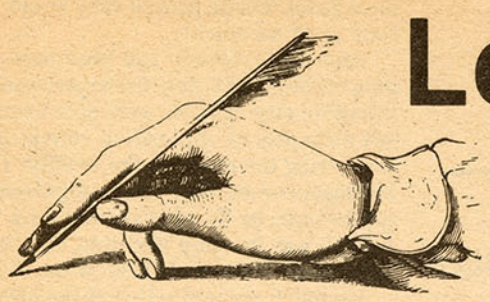


Letters

Porno Ordinance Lauded

Hat s off to Ann Arbor's city council for its recently passed ordinance restricting the display and number of pornographic stores in town. Such restrictions are much needed, and in my estimation, long overdue. Social scientists widely agree explicit sexually oriented material is a healthful outlet in a society like ours which represses sexual expression. But it is also known that the evocative value of such material diminishes when as available as a common weekly news magazine. There is no doubt that our city had move(dangerously far in this permissive direction, thereby robbing porno customers of the forbidden delights to which they have been accustomed.

Again, I salute the city council for a decision, which although no doubt politically unpopular, helps restore some measure of the evocative value of sexually oriented material.

James Pearson

Tenants' Rights Story Corrected

We wish to express our appreciation to the Ann Arbor Observer for running the story explaining the tenants' rights ballot proposals in last month's edition. However, the story contained a few inaccuracies we feel should be corrected.

First, it was the Coalition for Better Housing and not the Ann Arbor Tenants Union that collected the 6000 signitures to place the issues on the ballot. The Coalition is a broadbased group including PIRGIM (the Public Interest Research Group in Michigan), Legal Aid, Friends of the Earth—Washtenaw, the Center for National Housing Law Reform, and the Tenants Union.

Second, the lease clause study was conducted by PIRGIM, and found that 95% of Ann Arbor leases had unenforcable and deceptive clauses, not 60% as reported in the Observer. The study also found that Ann Arbor leases contained an average of 6.6 deceptive or misleading clauses, the highest of any city in Michigan.

Finally, Lou Belcher as well as Mayor Al Wheeler support the "Truth in Renting Proposal" which would outlaw deceptive clauses from Ann Arbor leases. Mr. Belcher recently remarked, "Who could support misleading leases?"

Gary J. Claxton
Coalition for Better Housing

Property Tax Article

I would like to commend the Observer for its article last month on Ann Arbor property taxes. It is the most comprehensive analysis I have ever seen of this centrally important local issue.

My personal belief is that Americans now pay so many taxes for so many things that they can no longer fully grasp what all it is they are paying for with their tax dollars. And it is even harder to evaluate whether specific tax-supported government programs are worth what they cost. The result is that most citizens are confused and distrustful.

Your article was a helpful first step in helping Ann Arbor citizens know how much they are paying in local taxes and where it is going.

E.A. Worthington

I found your article on taxes very informative. In the table comparing taxes in other cities, however, you left out Detroit. Why? I'd like to know where Detroit will fit into that comparison.

Mrs. E. Fredenich

[Detroit's property taxes are hard to compare with Ann Arbor's. First of all, unlike Ann Arbor, Detroit has a city income tax which pays a portion of city services. Secondly, Detroit's millage is very high, but Detroit's properties tend to be assessed at well less than the 50% of market value, the standard practice of other Michigan cities.]

Special Apartment Needed

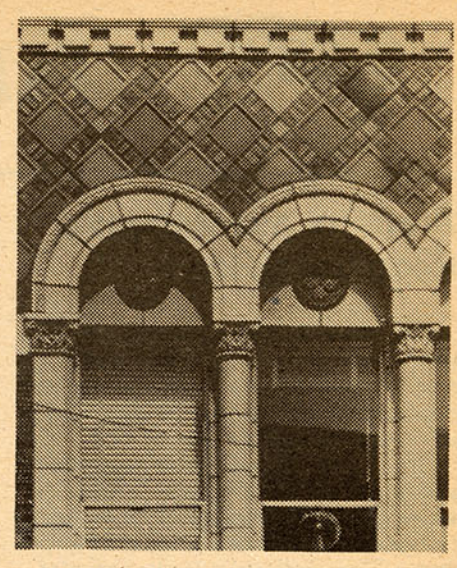
I am a woman who is quite sensitive to several chemicals, particularly oil and gas and those products which have these as their base.

In order to fully regain my health, I need to relocate to an electrically-heated apartment that preferably is not sprayed with pesticides, etc.

I am writing in hopes that some of your readers might be able to refer me to such apartments in the area.

I appreciate your publicizing this request.

Maryanne Kentz
769-9162 (between
11 & 2 and 9 & 11 pm)



Test Of the Town

If you know the location of this photo, you can win a record album of your choice from Liberty Music, 417 East Liberty, provided that your letter is one of the first two correct answers to reach us. Mail answers (no hand deliveries, please!) to the Ann Arbor Observer, 502 East Huron, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104.

Last month's mystery photo was not as difficult as we had anticipated. Mabelle Favers and Mark Federowicz were the first two of many who recognized it as the star-shaped window of the former Grace Bible Church at State and Huron. That small but handsome Romanesque Revival church was erected in 1882 as the First Unitarian Church. The Grace Bible Church, now located on 1300 S. Maple Road, still owns it, and it stands empty, in a rather deteriorated condition, awaiting a prospective buyer willing to meet Grace Bible's price (said to be between $200,000 and $250,000). Residential zoning and lack of parking make it a difficult property to renovate and develop for another use.

Bob Breck

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Then & Now: Washington & Fourth Ave.

1893

1932

1978

Most downtown streets weren't paved when the top photo was taken in 1893, looking north down Fourth Avenue from from the corver of Washington. J. Fred Hoelzle owned and operated the meat market in the turretted corner building. His wife Alice and daughter Elaine helped in the store, and they all lived upstairs.

By 1932, when Mel Ivory took the middle photo, the red brick was being painted over, perhaps because the Milan Beef company had just taken over operation of the market. At least Milan Beef is what is listed in the 1932 city directory at this location. But according to the sign, it continued to be known as the Washington Meat Market.

Since 1975 Harry's Army Surplus has occupied the building, which gradually fell into disrepair after the meat market left about 1950. The succession of tenants included Sun Cleaners (from the early fifties through 1962), Martin's Mineral Shop (1963-1971), and the Dragon Inn, a pinball parlor responsible for the outlandish combination of colors and patterns. Bonnie DeLoof and Estelle Schneider (owner-developers of the adjacent properties on Fourth Avenue) have recently purchased the building. •

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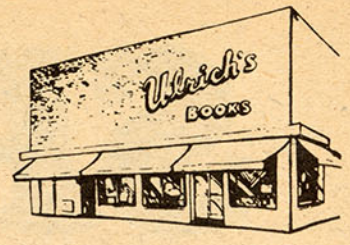

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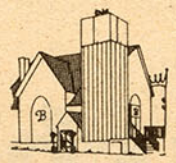

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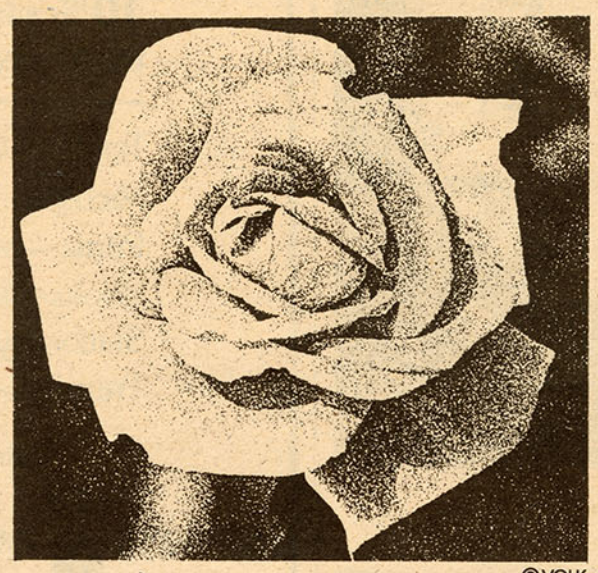

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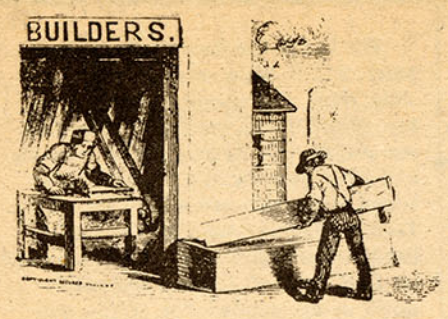


Changes

Artistic Renaissance in Stained Glass: The Story behind a new Gallery and Shop

The recent revival of serious craftsmanship has probably benefitted no field more than that of stained glass. Take the case of Richard Marks, for instance. (Marks is a 20-year professional in the field, and this month he will open Classical Glass, a new gallery and supplies shop in Liberty Plaza across from the Federal Building.) After graduating from Detroit's Society of Arts and Crafts (now known as the Center for Creative Studies) in 1958, Marks became head designer at Detroit Stained Glass, a good-sized stained glass studio. At that time nearly all commissions for stained glass came from churches. Even that source of business dwindled as the church-building boom petered out, and Detroit Stained Glass went bankrupt. Marks moved to Canton, Ohio to become head designer for White Associates, a major stained glass firm. But he and his wife Sandra wanted to return to southeastern Michigan, so they left to go into business for themselves. (Sandra handles the business and promotional end of the operation.)

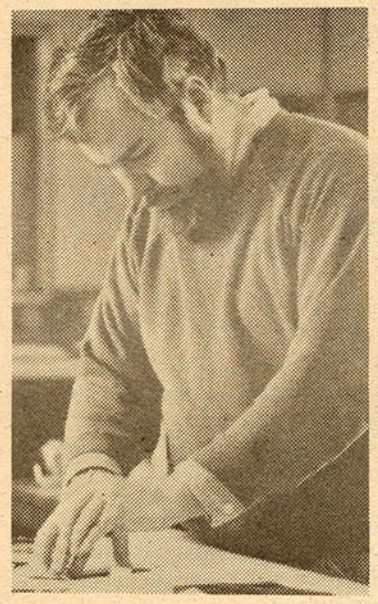
Each weekend they investigated a new location for their future house and studio. They settled on Adrian and set up shop. It wasn't easy at first. "Starving is what we did for many years," Sandra says. Non-ecclesiastical architectural work brought some commissions, but as recently as three years ago, 75% of their work was for churches.

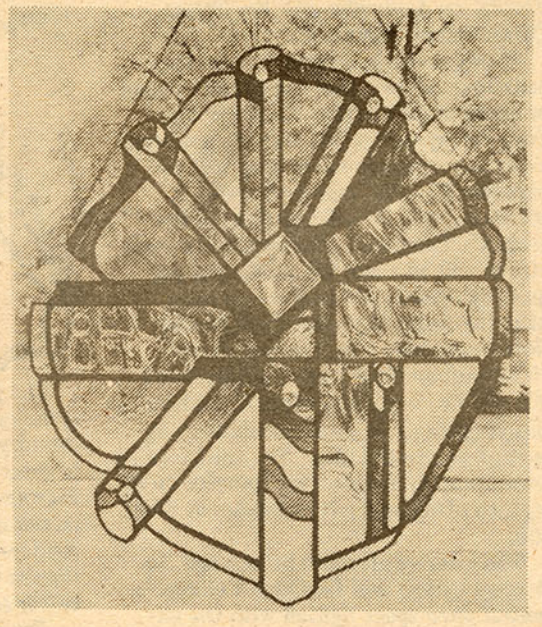
During their stay in Adrian, the Markses also taught stained glass at the Ann Arbor "Y". On the way home from the class just two years ago this spring, they made a short cut through Tecumseh which turned out to have momentous implications. Sandra Marks describes what happened in her characteristically spontaneous way:

While gorping at the large great homes, we spotted a cobblestone church: "For Sale." For two years we had been looking for just the right studio. We made an appointment to see it. We had to hold handkerchiefs to our faces. The air was pungent and made our eyes water. The beautiful building had been vacant for more than seven years. Some years earlier a water pipe had broken. The basement was knee-deep in murk and I could have sworn I saw an eel. The building seemed to house every bat, bird and insect in town.

Nevertheless we bought it, flushed it, scrubbed it, painted and rewired it. We moved in during September of '76 with 15 cases of glass, one thousand pounds of lead, 10 workbenches and our four working craftsmen.

We began giving tours to school children, seniors, and church groups. Soon we began entertaining architects, designers and builders. The church environment is one to cause excitement: watching the artist design and the craftsmen build, and seeing the gallery full of beautiful creations and hanging panels of mouth-blown glass. The old windows in the church are slowly being replaced with new ones—beautiful antique crystals and French streaky red glass.





Richard Marks

Today the Richard Marks firm is busy with many different kinds of commissions: banks, libraries, private homes, commercial buildings and restaurants as well as churches. Getting away from the religious symbolism common in church work has been exciting from a creative standpoint, Sandra says. "It allows Richard a lot more freedom in design." Richard is also doing well with autonomous art pieces—that is, moveable pieces that can be hung independently in front of a window or within a room. These large pieces about two to three feet high cost upwards of $125 . They are sold through galleries in New York, Chicago and Carmel, California. "These are not what people are used to seeing in typical crafts shops," according to Sandra. "They are wild, great free-form pieces, almost sculptural." The Marks Studio uses only mouth-blown glass (called "antique" because it's been made approximately the same way for over a thousand years), which creates interesting textural effects—streaks, bubbles, seedy patterns, and ripples of different thicknesses and depths of color. Marks designs the pieces; master craftsman Bill Walters makes the art pieces, and three other craftsmen help on other work.

Works by other East Coast and Midwestern stained glass artists will be shown in Classical Glass's street-level gallery. West Coast artists have gotten the lion's share of publicity, but as gallery manager, Sandra Marks wants to promote talent from other regions. Downstairs a complete line of glass and supplies will be sold, including mouth-blown European and American glass, plus poured "cathedral" glass. An informative catalog with background material and tips on working with glass is available at the Liberty Plaza store for the asking.

Individualized classes in working with glass will be offered downstairs. A student can take a series of eight personalized classes (20 hours altogether), arranged to suit his or her schedule, for a fee of something around $50. The fee includes materials (glass, lead, and related supplies) for the first project. "It's hard to learn when you meet only one night a week," Sandra explains. "You need more time to get into the work."

Classical Glass is scheduled to open May 1. As a gallery of fine glass work "it will be a first for the Midwest," according to Sandra Marks. •

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Changes/Continued

Architects Convert Brewery to Offices

the northern brewery

Tucked away on Jones Drive between Broadway and Plymouth Roads, overlooking Traver Creek, is an old brick structure originally built as a brewery in 1872. The brewery was variously known as the Northern Brewery, Ann Arbor Brewing Co., and The Ann Arbor City Brewery. The first brewmaster lived in the frame house that still stands next door. Around the turn of the century, when big breweries like Busch and Schlitz established national distribution networks by rail, small local breweries suffered. The City Brewery folded in 1906, leaving Ann Arbor with one remaining active brewery.

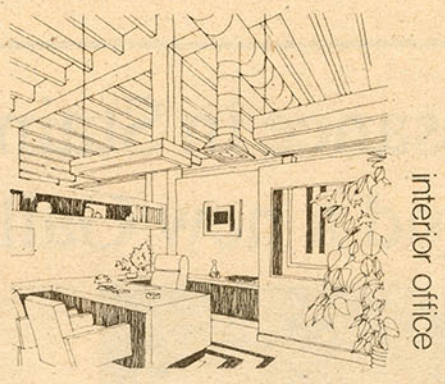
Ultimately the old brewery found another use. It housed the Ann Arbor Foundry from 1922 to 1972. The foundry made specialty castings (such as many local man-hole covers, imprinted with the words "The Ann Arbor"). A large one-story addition was built onto the original building. When the firm finally closed in 1972, its dirty smokestacks were stilled. The foundry buildings stood empty and vandalized, surrounded by cinders and broken glass, but nonetheless an intriguing place to many, including architects Dick Fry and Dave Peters. They have been interested in renovating the building as offices ever since the fall of 1975.

This month Phase One of "The Northern Brewery" will be complete. The 3000-square foot second story will be ready for occupancy by a doctor, lawyer, and the architects' own design and construction firms, Fry/Peters Associates and Fry/Peters Development Company.

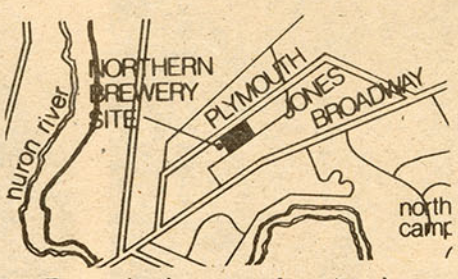
It was no easy matter to convince bank loan officers that the project would be economically viable. Dick Fry and Dave Peters had to take out big personal loans and persuade other investors to purchase $70,000 worth of shares at $5000 a share, in order to finance the project's first phase. The architects' own offices will be a real-life model for prospective tenants and lenders, to show what the finished product will be like. How soon phase two, the rest of the 15,000-square-foot main foundry building, will be completed depends on how long it takes to sell tenants and lending institutions on the idea. The total cost of renovating the entire main foundry building into office space is estimated at $750,000.

The interior plan will be unusual. Individual offices will face into a common central open space lighted with the existing foundry skylight. Walls adjoining the interior court will be glass. Exterior walls will be painted a putty brown-green because, Fry said, the brick walls have been patched too many places to look good if cleaned.

At yearly rates of $8.50 a square foot, rents will compare with office space of similar quality elsewhere in Ann Arbor.



interior office



The project's approved master plan includes plans to develop an adjacent foundry outbuilding as small offices and to erect eight townhouses between The Brewery and Arbor Springs Water. A mixed-use development of office and residential would make for people on the site 24 hours a day, which means better security.

Fry-Peters Development Company, the architectural firm's construction arm, is doing the construction work. By having their own construction company, Fry says, architects can coordinate design and construction aspects of a job more smoothly and avoid architect-contractor disputes over job specifications, which can leave the client caught in the middle.

The bar at the Real Seafood Company, 341 S. Main, used to be inaccessible, dark, and uncomfortable. Now, transformed into the D Dennison bar-restaurant with its own street entrance and a big window, it's a bright warm-toned place with oak and inlaid tiles. Leonard Lemive manages the establishment, which is served from the regular Real Seafood kitchen and offers quick meals (sandwiches, soups, and salads) featuring (but not limited to) seafood. Hours: 11:30 AM-2 AM, seven days a week.

The Herb Room at the Fourth Avenue Avenue People's Food Co-Op is moving around the corner to 211 East Ann formerly Thompson's Pizzeria) so it can expand from its present cramped 80 square foot space into 400 square feet.

Ann Arbor Tomorrow, the non-profit downtown improvment association, is moving out of its quarters in the Chamber of Commerce into the space above the Pretzel Bell at 122½ E. Liberty, where Fry/Peters architects used to be. Moving day is April 10. People interested in finding out more
Moving day is April 10. People interested in finding out more about AAT are invited to the short annual meeting and following open house on April 21 between 3 and 6 p.m.

When Ann Arbor Federal Savings and First Federal Savings of Battle Creek merged, they weren't in any hurry to change their names, which are well recognized in their respective communities. The Ann Arbor Federal name goes back to 1939, and the institution itself started out in 1892 as the Huron Valley Building and Savings Association. But the Federal Home Loan Bank Board requires a new name after a merger to reflect the institutions' new status, so as of this month, the name of Great Lakes Federal Savings and Loan has replaced the familiar Ann Arbor Federal signs around town.

Going away for the summer?

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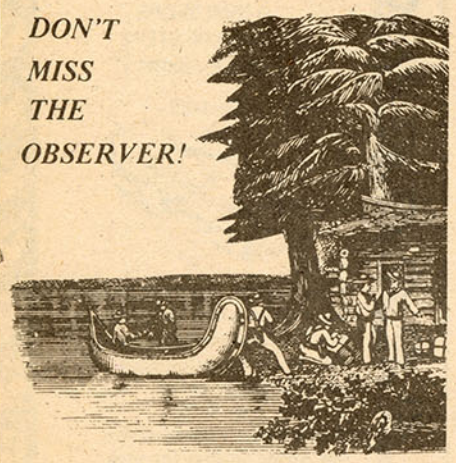

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The Working Man's Store

Shahin's Custom Tailoring, now open at 212 S. Main, offers custom-made clothing for men and women, as well as major alterations and repairs. Shahin Uzuncan and his wife Azat have been designers and custom tailors in Ann Arbor for twelve years, operating from their home on Ticknor Court. Now they have purchased the Main Street building and will also continue to offer evening hours at their home. They offer 3000 different fabrics and guarantee satisfaction to fit. The store also offers ready-made shirts, jackets and ties and rents formal wear. The Uzuncans (and most other Ann Arbor tailors) are of Armenian descent. They aren't sure why so many tailors are Armenians.

The Michigan Free Press, Washtenaw County's Third World independent newspaper, has folded, and according to sources close to the paper, has filed for bankruptcy. Editor and publisher George DePue started the publication in 1973, using money inherited from a family trust fund. The paper initially appeared every other week and then became a weekly, publishing both Lansing and Ann Arbor editions. It termed itself non-partisan, and its fiercest editorial criticism was generally directed at liberals like Al Wheeler rather than conservative Republicans. National and international oppression, injustice and conspiracy stories were frequent and sensationally headlined.

Though the publication was well designed and professionally promoted as an advertising vehicle, it never seemed to gain a constituency of devoted readers like the old Ann Arbor Sun had. The Sun was equally radical but, it was generally agreed, fun to read. The Michigan Free Press weekly entertainment calendar and TV guide were probably its most popular features. Plans were underway last fall to expand the TV and entertainment section into the Detroit area in order to establish a more solid financial base.

The building at Washington and Fourth Ave. was owned by the paper. It was recently sold to local real estate investors.

The new Great Copy Company downtown at 110 E. Washington is the first Ann Arbor copy center to make a bid principally for non-academic business. (U-M course packs account for half of the volume at campus copy centers during the peak months of September and January, and dissertations are another big part of the work they get.) Bill and Don Ternes and Chris Bashawaty of Great Copy hope to base their business on downtown professional firms (especially lawyers, architects, and engineers) who produce reports and other documents that require quality and quantity beyond the capabilities of most office copiers. Their Xerox 9400 is the most sophisticated copier now available. It prints two copies a second, feeds originals and prints back-to-back automatically, and has better quality and darkness control than the previous Cadillac of copying, the Xerox 9200.

J & J Copying on South University (beneath the Bagpiper) was opened last month by Jim and June Smith, formerly of Albert's Copying. They have a Xerox 9400.

The architectural firm of Colvin-Robinson Associates has been acquired by the newly-formed Herrmann-Holman Partnership, consisting of Rick Hermann and Woody Holman. Herrmann has practiced architecture most recently in his own one-man office. He is acting chairman of the city's Planning Commission. Holman, principal of Colvan-Robinson, was commission chairman until his term expired last year. Herrmann and Holman purchased the shares of firm founders Tex Colvin, who is retiring, and Dick Robinson, who will remain active in the firm.

As Holman explained the transaction: "Rick and I have wanted to get together in a design-oriented office. Colvin-Robinson has always been strong in technical capabilities. It has an excellent reputation for buildings that are well engineered and solid. There is room for improving our design image, however, and for my money Rick is the best designer around. We plan to emphasize the design aspect of architecture and get into new areas like interior design, landscape and urban design. We're not interested in planning and studies for the sake of studies, but in designing for something that will actually be developed and built." The new partners believe in design that is appropriate but not far-out, Holman said.

The Loft on the third floor of the Ann Arbor Art Association, 117 W. Liberty, contains work spaces for eleven artists and craftspeople. A group exhibit of Loft members' work is downstairs in the Art Association gallery through the month of April.

Sixteen Hands, the cooperative crafts shop at 119 W. Washington, has added a new member. Jill Damon, a weaver, has left her job as social work administrator to devote more time to her craft. She makes fourteen hands for the store; two more are needed. Members are looking for one more craftsperson to join them, a glass worker, if possible.

Muehlig's has just opened a Tall Togs shop specializing in junior-type styles for tall women. Tall Togs carries sportswear, dresses, coats, swimwear and lingerie. According to Sue DeFord, who started the shop, tall women usually either have to learn to sew or buy through mail-order catalogs like Lane Bryant that specialize in clothes for hard-to-fit women. Regular clothes are too short in the arms, legs and torso. She knows; she's 5'10", and regular sleeves are 3" too short on her. With a husband who's 6'7" (Muehlig's owner-manager Tom DeFord) and teenage daughters closing in on 6', she's well aware of the problems tall people face in finding clothes. She didn't want her daughters to be stuck wearing matronly fashions, and tall women are lucky if they even find those in most big stores.

BRIEFLY NOTED: **New on State St. next to Olga's.: The Seventh House,** selling inexpensive imported clothing from India, and **The Ann Arbor Novelty Company,** specializing in an old-fashioned assortment of gag items and realistically-detailed rubber bands. . . . **Dietzel's Shoes** at 309 S. Main has become exclusively a Hush Puppies shoe store. Randy James of Randy's Family Shoes in Saline bought the business from Charlie Smith. . . . **Moped America** has moved into the Fourth Ave. Arcade on South Fourth, where the Army recruiter was. It stocks several brands of the popular light-weight motor bikes. . . . **At the Ann Arbor Inn,** former Village Bell manager Dick Lotz has replaced Bill Marzonie as manager. Lotz was instrumental in forming the Ann Arbor Conference and Visitors' Bureau while he was manager of the Campus Inn. •

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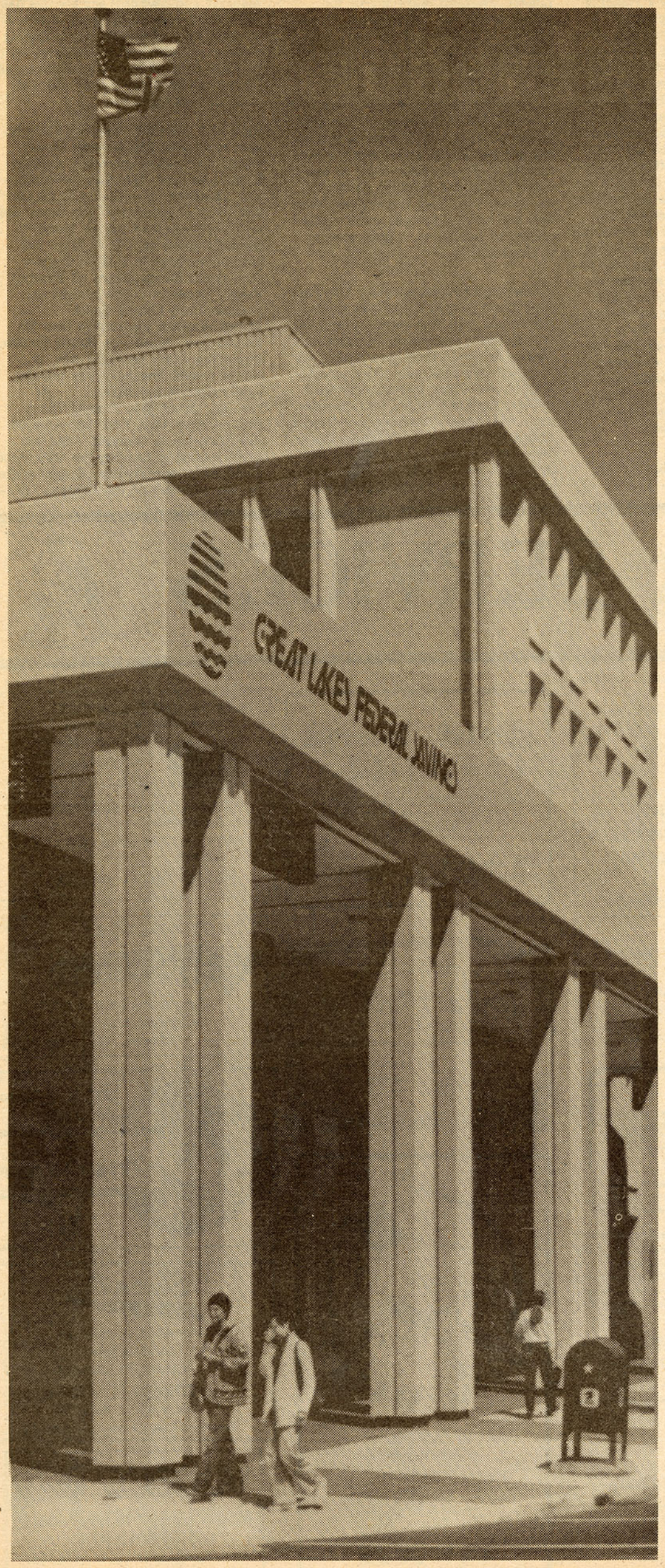

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Belcher Looks Ahead

THE morning after his narrow election victory over incumbent Mayor Albert Wheeler, Republican Mayor-elect Lou Belcher sat relaxed in his Washington Street office, surrounded by congratulatory bottles of champagne and Tennessee sour mash whiskey. Belcher could afford to relax now. After seven years and three attempts, he had finally been elected Mayor of the City of Ann Arbor.

Although he has been in the spotlight for many years, Belcher told us the public doesn't know what he's really like. And unlike all other mayors in Ann Arbor's past, he has only one year to prove himself.

"I'm not the brash hipshooter I've been portrayed as," Belcher says. He claims that that false image was the most difficult thing he had to overcome in his campaign. "Actually, I'm really a very careful person." Belcher, who heads a management consulting firm, First Ann Arbor Corporation, claims that his clients wouldn't tolerate the intemperate style he is accused of displaying.

Belcher sees himself as a confident, competent manager, a man of action. "I work best when I'm under pressure, with ten things going on all at once. I'm not afraid to make decisions." Belcher frequently accused Wheeler of being indecisive and overcautious.

Belcher also claims that he was misrepresented as a "one-constituent candidate," interested only in the welfare of downtown. "I really want to be a mayor of all the people. I honest-to-God do."

As if to prove his point, Belcher spent an hour with Wheeler the morning after the election, assuring him that the new administration would not be totally insensitive to the values of the half of the city that didn't vote for the new mayor. "No radical funding changes will be made in Model Cities. The dental clinic will be built. I told Al that today,"

Peter Yates

Belcher said.

Not surprisingly, Belcher has a long list of goals that he would like to accomplish before next year's election rolls around. First on the list is the appointment of individuals to about 25 vacancies on various city boards and commissions. Many of these positions have remained unfilled because of the deadlock between the Democratic mayor and Republican Council majority.

Belcher says he has already instructed City Administrator Sylvester Murray to begin work as soon as weather permits on the $995,000 road repair package which Murray prepared. Belcher says he will let the Streets, Traffic and Parking Department make most of the decisions about which streets to repair.

Streets will receive a large share of Belcher's attention during the next year. He expects to come up with $600,000-$700,000 in additional money for street repairs from the city's general fund, for a total expenditure of $1.8-$2.3 million. He expects some of the money to come from the Municipal Garage budget, the Planning Department and the subsidies presently being given to the Airport, golf course fund and Vets Ice Arena.

Another target for cutbacks is the recreation department, particularly in the area of non-residents fees. Although non-city-residents pay higher fees to use city facilities, Belcher feels city residents are still subsidizing the out-of-towners.

Another key and sensitive area is personnel. Belcher was hesitant to discuss individual department heads, but implied that some changes are in the offing. Belcher does not however expect to see any public firings by City Council. The preferred approach is to consult with Murray, let him know Council's wishes and let the Administrator make the personnel decisions administratively.

Several key positions will definitely be filled. The Controller's job is presently vacant, and Acting City Attorney Bruce Laidlaw is almost sure to be replaced by a permanent Attorney more to the Republicans' liking. Although Belcher would not comment on it directly, another department head said to be in some jeopardy is City Clerk Jerome Weiss.

Asked to go out on a limb and make some predictions about things that will occur during his one-year term, Belcher offered an ambitious list. "I'm sure that work will be underway on a new parking structure," Belcher boasted. He also expects to see the creation of an Economic Development Corporation, the streamlining of the planning process, a more responsive bureaucracy and the implementation of zero-base budgeting.

Belcher realizes it will be tougher to be mayor than to criticize. "One thing I never will do is abdicate responsibility. What happens next year will be my fault or my glory."

Asked if Ann Arbor voters are likely to see the name of Louis D. Belcher on the April 2, 1979 ballot, the Mayor-elect said, "I imagine it will be."

—Tom Wieder

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Behind the Republican Victory

IT was supposed to be close, and it was, although it was a landslide compared to last year. And although the election produced a different winner in the mayor's race, it was almost a carbon copy of the previous edition. Turnout was up substantially over 1977 (up 31.5%), but it was almost evenly spread throughout the city's five wards and couldn't, by itself, explain the result.

Official returns gave Republican Lou Belcher a 282-vote margin over Democrat Al Wheeler 14,399 (50.5%) to 14,117 (49.5%). With a shift as small as this from last year's results, it would be foolish to engage in any complex analysis about why Belcher won. The support for the two men was just about the same, with Belcher increasing his vote a little more than Wheeler.

There is one area of the returns which might explain the difference. While city-wide turnout was up 31.5%, the number of absentee ballots increased 43%, and these ballots were 77% for Belcher. In the Third Ward alone, Belcher increased his absentee ballot margin by 258 votes, almost equal to his victory margin. It has been reported that much of this increase came from the senior citizen residents of John Knox Village. Wheeler was heavily criticized for vetoing the retirement center's expansion. These figures indicate that the veto may have cost him the election.

Absentee ballots are always good to the Republicans, but this year especially so. Republicans made a special effort to put absentee ballots in voters' hands, and the strategy worked.

In the City Council races, there was only one surprise. As expected, Democrats took the First and Second Wards by wide margins, while the Republicans won easily in the Third and Fifth. But most observers thought the Fourth Ward would go to former three-term Democratic Councilman Leroy Cappaert over newcomer David Fisher.

The GOP had only once before obtained a majority vote in the Fourth, that coming in 1977 with Ron Trowbridge running as an incumbunt. Cappaert's superior name recognition and experience were thought to be enough in a ward most perceived as basically Democratic. Even GOP sources reported that Fisher was not working that hard, and Trowbridge himself predicted a Cappaert victory.

Fisher's 58-vote victory should dispel some notions about the Fourth Ward. It isn't as liberal or as Democratic as once thought. The combined Democratic-HRP mayoral vote in 1975 was only 50.0%; Wheeler carried the Fourth by only 11 votes in 1977; and Belcher won it this year by over 100 votes. The Fourth is an amazingly accurate reflection of the entire city, and when the city-wide race is close, the Fourth is likely to be also.

Lou Belcher says Fisher actually worked extremely hard in the last month of the campaign, after a slow start caused by some unavoidable family responsibilities. He claimed that the former U-M fullback did extensive door-to-door campaigning which showed up in the precinct returns.

Retiring Fourth Ward Democratic Councilman Jamie Kenworthy believes that the Mayoral race determined the outcome of the Fourth Ward contest. Kenworthy says the race for the top spot overshadowed the issues and personalities of the Council race. Voters tended to support the council candidate from the same party as their mayoral choice. Kenworthy notes that his own two victories, the only ones ever for Democrats in the Fourth, occurred in non-mayoral years.

Although the mayoral results were only a little different from last year, the nature of the campaign differed greatly. The Belcher campaign was almost totally absent from the media, running only two newspaper ads early in the campaign. Instead the GOP used a well-thought-out strategy combining phone canvassing and a series of targeted direct-mailings.

About six weeks before the election, the GOP did a telephone survey of about 500 candidates, the issues and campaign tactics. One of the chief designers of the survey was Robert Teeter, Vice-President and director of the political division of Market Opinion Research, one of the best known political polling organizations in the country. Teeter is an Ann Arbor resident and has been working on local GOP campaigns for a number of years.

The survey indicated that most voters were very well-acquainted with the two mayoral candidates and with the issues involved. Advertising designed to produce Belcher converts would be a waste of money and would only arouse the opposition. Republican strategists decided that most voters had already made up their minds, and that the best thing to concentrate on was getting out the Belcher vote.

The Belcher campaign devised several specialized letters, targeted for different types of voters. A folksy letter from Belcher's wife, Myrna, went to Fifth Ward voters. It included things like. "Lou sometimes buys the groceries for our family and realizes the high cost of living facing families today." A letter from former Republican Mayor James Stephenson went to homeowners. It hit hard at Ann Arbor's high property taxes and came in an envelope marked "Important Tax Information Enclosed."

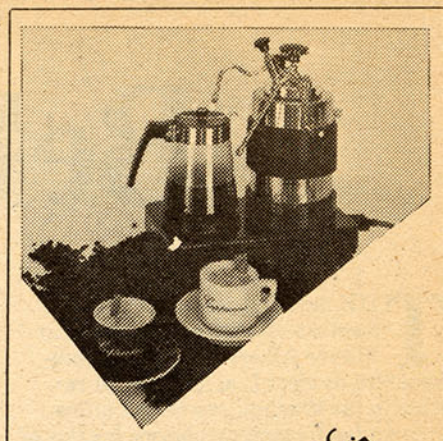
An extensive phone canvass was conducted to determine the party leanings of voters. Likely Democratic voters were eliminated from the mailing lists. Identified Republicans got a breezy pep talk letter from Belcher. Undecided voters got a pursuasion piece. Reminder-to-vote postcards went out to known supporters a few days before the election.

Belcher is convinced that the new strategy won the election for him, but with the results so similar to last year, it is difficult to prove that the type of campaign made any difference.

The election leaves the Democrats with only four seats on Council, all from the First and Second Wards. Jamie Kenworthy is concerned that this will create an even stronger division between the "tenant" areas of the city, represented by Democrats, and the "homeowner" areas, represented by Republicans.

The swing of a few hundred votes would have given the Democrats a 6-5 majority on Council including the Mayor's seat. Instead, the Republicans are the first party to completely control the Council since 1975. The GOP will bear full responsibility for what happens in the city during the next year. The Republicans ran against high taxes and in favor of extensive street repairs. If, a year from now, taxes are still high and the streets aren't noticeably improved, the GOP may find itself on the short end of a new Council majority. •

—Tom Wieder



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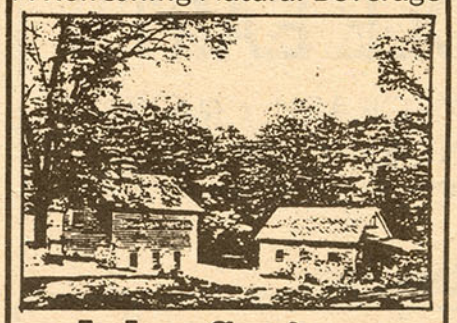

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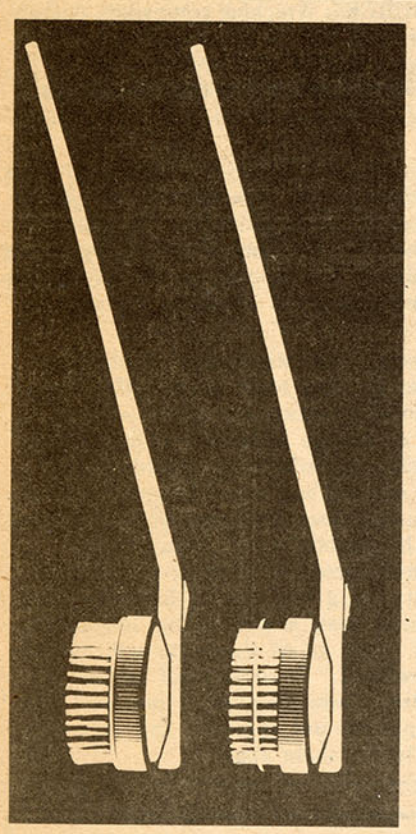

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Introducing some connoisseurs in an increasingly popular pastime.

PHOTOS BY PETER YATES

Susan Wineberg's collection of boxes, trays and assorted bric-a-brac comes mainly from the Treasure Mart, rummage sales and grocery stores around the world.

The Tasteful Scavengers

APRIL marks the kickoff to the scavenging season. Spring housecleaning brings yard cales. Outdoor flea markets begin again. And in Ann Arbor at the end of the month, close to 20,000 students move out of their apartments and sell some of the rummage and books they've spent the past few years accumulating.

To mark the opening of the scavenging season, and to show what can be done with found or bargain-price junk, we sought out three connoisseurs in this increasingly popular field.

Anybody can buy junk, of course, cojrse, but it takes energy and determination to become a truly tasteful scavenger.

The tasteful scavengers seek out what others have thrown away for being unfashionable, outmoded, or eccentric. Junk stimulates the scavengers' curiosity and ingenuity. Like the conventional antique collectors, they seek to surround themselves with things they love. But they avoid the aura of social prestige and genteel refinement that often surround the typical antique collectors.

Some of these tasteful scavengers can be veritable artists in home furnishings, specializing in assembling unusual environments. Perhaps youthful poverty or love of a bargain is what got them started, but what keeps them going is the stimulating satisfaction that they are special—*they* can see possibilities in things *other* people throw away. Investigating rummage sales and curbside trash piles is never beneath their dignity, even when age and position have advanced them into the upper levels or income and society. They can't resist telling about their greatest finds—the stunning three-dollar table or the distinctive thrift shop lamp.

Fashion usually enters into a scavenger's acquisitions, but most likely in a negative way. What's back in fashion again doesn't find its way to the trash. Tasteful scavengers may stay well ahead of fashion or well behind it (which sometimes turns out to be the same thing), or they may ignore it completely and develop extremely personal tastes.

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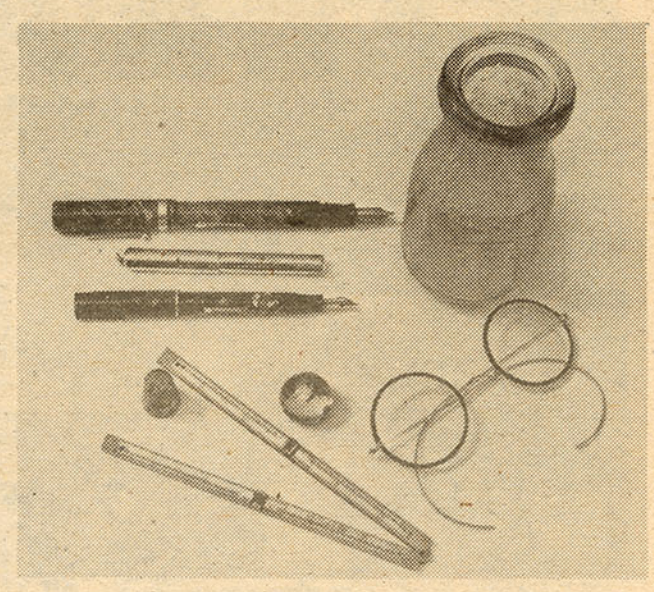
Marty and Wid Schmidt: The Ecology of Antiques

Marty and Wid Schmidt amidst a sampling of objects either found or purchased very cheaply. Total cost of pictured items: $19.25. The antique highboy is not a scavenged item; it's one of the earliest pieces made by Wid's ancestors' furniture company, Widdicombe Brothers of Grand Rapids.

MARTY and Wid Schmidt are scavengers by conviction. Their "waste not, want not" Yankee backgrounds were further stiffened with a liberal dose of contemporary ecology, Mother Earth News-styles, to make them committed conservationists and whole earth people. They work for the People's Food Co-op, save envelopes for reuse as note paper, and sell all their leftover rags, paper and metal to Lansky's for recycling.

Two and a half years ago they purchased a house built in 1860 on Ann Street that had been vacant for fourteen years. With an eleven-room house to restore, they have become scavengers on a massive scale. Their back yard is full of salvage materials from the demolished Barbour-Waterman Gymnasiums, and four rooms (plus the basement) are full of furniture, tools, and materials to be used in fixing up the house. Because the house had been vandalized, they had to reacquire most of the hardware, light fixtures, register vents, and even the radiator valves.

Recycling is not only economical, it is more aesthetically pleasing, Wid feels. Older metal objects are made of heavier gauges and quality of materials and craftsmanship is usually better on older things. Well constructed wood furniture is virtually indestructable under normal use and can almost always be repaired, refinished and reupholstered . . . if you can learn how to perform the job yourself. Marty and Wid both feel that most Americans suffer from a "can't do" attitude fostered by a throwaway culture. Its salesmanship undermines people's confidence in their abilities to do things for themselves "People laughed at us when we bought this house," Marty says. "But a lot of the seemingly insurmountable problems turned out to be the simplest." The Schmidts feel that if you have self-confidence along with the time to learn how to solve problems, you can do a surprising number of things yourself, like making your own replacement window sash, upholstering furniture, and salvaging woodwork and flooring from buildings about to be torn down.



(Above) The finished result can be seen in the front parlor. When Marty and Wid bought the house, the room was filthy, full of crumbling plaster, peeling wallpaper and decaying animal carcasses. It took about two months of hard work scraping and sanding wallpaper and woodwork, spackling and patching the plaster, refinishing the hardwood floor and painting with oil paint before the room was ready to use. They always use oil because it replenishes the oil in the wood, they feel. The furniture consists mostly of family antiques.

(Below) Old fountain pens with gold points can still be found at sales for a few dollars. After a $7 trip to the pen hospital (The Fountain Pen Hospital, 18 Vesey Street, New York, N.Y.) they're as good as their new $75 counterparts. The engraved gold and silver thimble was found with a metal detector in the back yard, along with metal doorknobs, a child's shovel, and lots of beer cans. Metal detectors may be rented from U-Do-It and A-1 Rentals. Other objects include Marty's glasses ($1 in a junk shop), a found milk bottle, and the folding ivory ruler, an early Stanley tool from Wid's carpenter great-grandfather.

Books like those listed in the **Whole Earth Catalog** can be very helpful. But Wid points out that you can expand your resources even further by developing a network of people who can help each other out. His key technique in acquiring necessary salvage items is to let lots of people know what he's looking for. (Right now he is looking for a two-story stable or garage that needs to be moved. He wants it for the back yard.) Because friends and neighbors know the Schmidts reuse a lot of old things, they think of them whenever they have stuff to give away. In this manner they have gotten at no cost an antique daybed, a vacuum cleaner, many old tools, desk chairs, stools, tool cabinets and countless other items.

As master scavengers, Marty and Wid have two advantages over many people: space and time. Their house has a lot of room to store their prizes, and they aren't pressured into getting everything done in a hurry. Wid (short for Widdicombe) is a graduate student in geography; Marty produces videotapes for educators. They plan to own their house a long time, so they're willing to take a year to complete two or three rooms. Judging by their parlor, the final results will be worth the wait.

SOURCES: Wrecking companies, demolition sites (see "A Scavenger's Guide" for tips on dealing with wreckers), house sales, junk shops (especially the Grand Rapids Mission Store), and the streets.

Ann Arbor's streets and sidewalks have yielded much, especially in late April, when students move out. At other times Wid has been rewarded by taking walks in the evening on the day before trash pick-up is scheduled for an area.

Dealing with wreckers at demolition sites requires some finesse. The contracted wreckers are legally entitled to all salvage materials, of course, so scavenging informally would actually be stealing and could bring on serious consequences. Wid approaches wreckers in his grubby work clothes, so he comes across as a fellow professional, which in a sense he is. Bargaining for special deals is part of the negotiating—"If I buy all of these, then throw that in with it." Do-it-yourself salvage requires a wrecking bar, a sense of how things are put together, and experience in taking them apart. •

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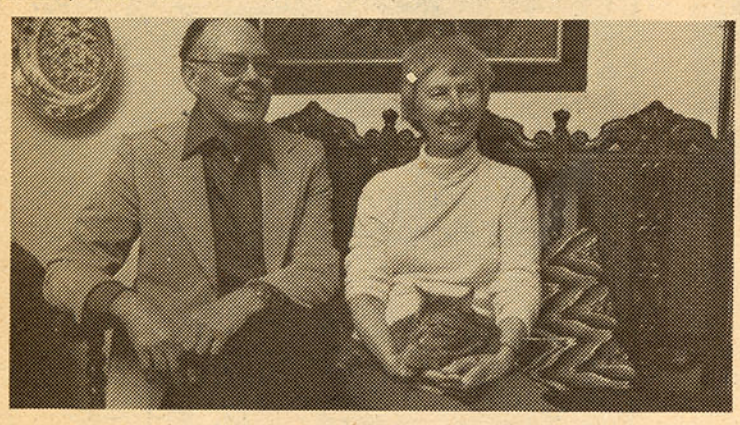
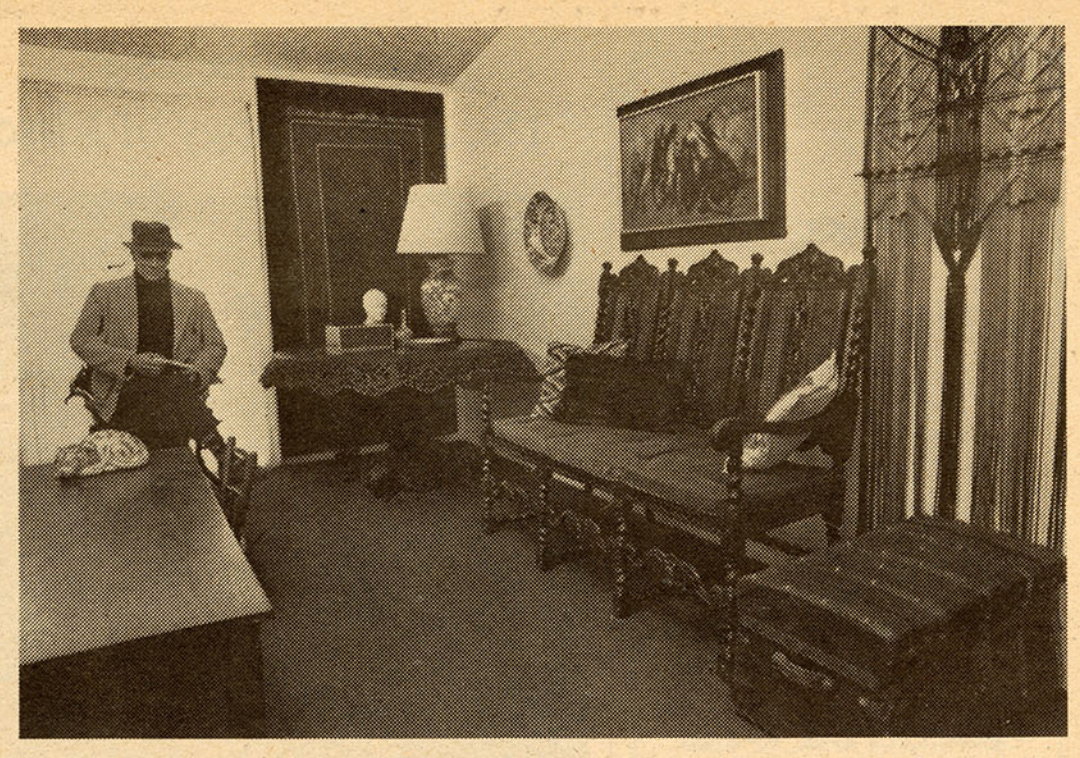
This surplus hospital medicine cabinet, repainted in a tortoise-shell pattern, contains some of the boxes and small objects Jerry collects.



Jerry and Claire Hodge with Bunny the cat.



The Hodges' living room contains an assortment of unusual pieces from many sources. The porcelain cat, phrenology head, antique box, oriental rug, lamp and bowl all come from conventional antique dealers. So does the Chinese carved rosewood table. When it was brought out to be auctioned off at Schmidt's, the man sitting behind the Hodges exclaimed in horror, "Ugh, GROSS!" But, Jerry says, "That made me want it all the more." The coffee table is a $3 lab table from U-M Property Disposition, stripped and cut down. The mannequin, sitting in a chair made of caribou horns, comes from Mario's mannequin repair shop in a converted tannery in Detroit's Greektown. The elaborate settee, made in the 1920's, was purchased from a salvage man about to haul it away from Mary Markley dorm. It was repaired and recaned. The fur pillow covers come from a thrift shop fur coat.

Claire and Jerry Hodge: The Aesthetics of Junk

A 28-year marriage between two compatible collectors is likely to result in a very distinctive home, particularly if they are attracted to the curious and the off-beat. Claire and Jerry Hodge's house is such a house—a veritable museum of curiosities, tastefully displayed. Visitors (who can view it on this year's Ann Arbor Women's City Club Homes Tour, Friday, April 28) are likely to see things they've never encountered before, such as a horn chair (its supporting members are made entirely of caribou horns), boxes sided with African porcupine quills, a porcelain head used in phrenology, an old French chest of drawers with silhouettes of ferns, flowers, and insects (created by splattering a stain over real-life natural objects pinned to the wood surface).

As in a museum, everything is not on display at once. The collection rotates according to its owners' inclinations. Closets and drawers are full of other treasures: cigar band ash trays, labels from wine bottles, bottlecaps waiting to be turned into a rusty sculpture some day, fabrics collected for Claire's sewing projects, galls off of oak trees, shells, and so on. Even the yard has a collection of interesting rocks brought home from trips.

When the Hodges were first married, they bought old furniture because they got better quality for their money with antiques. They have always collected old and unusual accessories, but they went through a phase of having Danish modern furniture, which has been largely discarded in favor of antique and eccentric pieces. Though they enjoy going to antique shops, and often do, they still check out garage sales and auctions as well.

Jerry heads the U-M program in medical illustration. As a medical illustrator, his training is in both art and medicine, a fact which helps explain his interest in natural objects and in detail. In his professional work, he seeks beauty and refinement in subjects which others might be squeamish about—abnormal eyeballs, organs revealed by surgical incisions, and so forth. Next to a group of insect drawings on the hall wall, for example, are two stunning color paintings of the pupil of an eye showing copper deposits due to a medical condition called hypercuperemia.

Jerry has been a collector since childhood, perhaps because his father had an aversion to old things and was always throwing them out. Claire comes from a family of collectors. Her mother in Oklahoma is an artist and has a barn full of junk she uses for subjects of paintings, including some nicely rusted pieces of a Model A found in a nearby gully.

Claire collects small iron objects such as doorstops, animals and paperweights. "I love to see a piece of junk you can use some interesting way," she says. "I almost quit going to auctions at Schmidt's because my resistance is so low. Sometimes it's frightening—you get this feeling of helplessness to see something that would be so attractive used a certain way. Not to buy it at such a bargain is more than you can stand. It is an addiction, and I've got it in the worst way. Jerry's just as bad, so at least we're well matched. We can't say 'I told you so,' because we're both bad. I think I might be worse about picking up stray animals." (At present the Hodges are down to two cats, a dog, and a tarantula.)

"Our son John, I'm afraid, is going to be just like us," Jerry adds. "He won't pitch a thing. He has lots of little collections—bones, skulls, autographs, a plastic spoon some rock star ate a piece of cake with. Our daughter Melinda won't throw away things either, but I don't think she is attached to things the way we are."

Despite all the collections and objects, the Hodges' house is quite neat. Built in the 50's, it has contemporary lines and not much decorative detail, which, together with the white walls, keep the interiors uncluttered despite the variety of things on the walls. Claire and Jerry intentionally bought a one-story house without basement or attic in order to curb their desire to collect still more. Rooms are not overcrowded with furniture, and the floors are clear, not piled with things. Jerry's most extensive collection, wood and metal boxes, doesn't take much space. One messy workroom absorbs most of the really uncontrollable clutter.

Arranging and displaying their heterogeneous collection is no simple matter, of course. Sizes, shapes and textures are the important elements which arrangements must always take into account. But Jerry says he follows no hard and fast rules. He goes more by feeling. "You rearrange things until they're pleasing. Each time you walk by, you get to see them a new way."

FAVORITE SOURCES: Don Johnson's Antiques on Jackson Road in Lima Center; Schmidt's Antique Shop and auction house at 5138 W. Michigan just west of Ypsilanti, where auctions are held on the first Friday and Saturday of the month: and antique shops in Plymouth and Northville; occasional yard and rummage sales, found natural objects, which they like to incorporate into personal art and crafts projects. Also the Ann Arbor Antiques Market, held on the third Sunday of each month from April through November at the Saline Fairgrounds on Saline-Ann Arbor Road near the intersection with Pleasant Lake Road. Hundreds of dealers from the Midwest and East have stalls. There is a $1 admission. Last but not least, University of Michigan Property Disposition, located in a big North Campus warehouse at 3241 Baxter Road, just past the Highway Safety Research Institute on Baxter and Huron Parkway. U-M departments, dorms, and apartment facilities dispose of surplus equipment and furniture here. Summer brings more items as dorms and classrooms are renovated. Hours: 12-4, Monday through Friday. •

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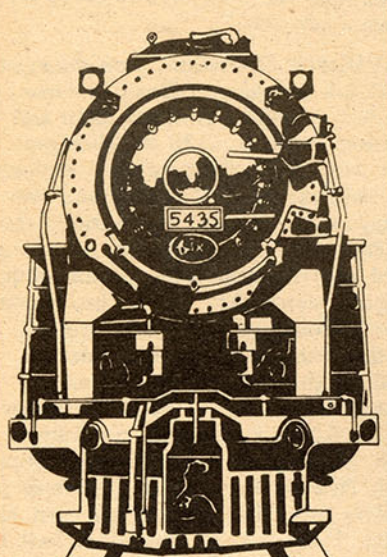

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Susan Wineberg: The Archaeology of Kitsch

Susan Wineberg in a Chinese tunic made of fabric purchased at the Treasure Mart.

(Right) This picture grouping is symmetrically arranged in a turn-of-the-century manner. A collection of small boxes is on the bookcase, next to a row of small framed snapshots.

SUSAN Wineberg's apartment is so cluttered with fascinating objects that every time you visit it you notice something for the first time. Of course some things strike you right away: in the kitchen, the red wall phone mounted on the pig-shaped bread board; the paper cut-out basket of vegetables and fruit; a large glazed parrot plaque, brightly colored; collections of decorative plates, utilitarian graters, and more kinds of beautiful commercial boxes and tins than you've probably ever seen. But you're likely to miss the tiny Land o'Lakes butter Indian princess in a hanging brass dish or the plastic toy soldiers standing on the lip of a mustache cup.

You could call Susan's apartment "camp"—referring to its ironic or amusing quality of extravagant gesture and style. The clutter really is extravagant, and so is the detail and variety of objects collected. But to Susan it isn't camp at all. She chose nearly everything not for its shock value but for its interesting and beautiful qualities, either alone or in juxtaposition with other things.

Despite the contrasts and surprises, the place has an amazing consistency. All these things—dolls, shoes, postage stamps, framed family photographs, Middle Eastern textiles, restaurant china and kitschy souvenirs—somehow belong together naturally. The furniture, inherited with the apartment, has an "always-been-that-way" look that lends a note of believability and integrity to a collection of objects that, less sensitively put together, could seem forced and contrived.

Assembling and taking care of this live-in cultural collage is one of Susan Wineberg's chief interests. (She is an archaeology Ph.D. student, specializing in ancient Near Eastern history, and also pursues an active interest in historic preservation in Ann Arbor.) It has taken her nine years and $15 to $25 a month to accumulate her things. She has never spent over $150 on anything—and that $150 was for a rug acquired in Istanbul with her entire earnings from an archaeological dig.

Susan's addiction to collecting didn't begin until she moved into her spacious apartment in a house on Ann Street built in 1867. She had always lived with other people, and living alone was for her taking a big plunge. Without realizing it at first, she started making her apartment into a personal statement. She began stopping by the Treasure Mart on Saturdays after going to the Farmers' Market, and added to the collection of souvenirs from trips and family photographs she already had.

Susan didn't (and still doesn't) have much money, so she buys inexpensive things. "I don't want to take the risk on something really expensive," she says. "But I think if I got things for free, I wouldn't like them as much. There's something about the transaction itself I like."

As Susan's personalization of the apartment progressed, the pace and range of the acquisitions stepped up. Grocery shelves yielded olive oil cans, matchboxes, candy tins, and biscuit boxes. Trips to the Middle East brought many of the rugs and textiles. Friends started using Susan's house as a sort of museum and repository for all the things they just had to buy but didn't quite know what to do with. Stuart Klein in particular came up with many clever ideas and visual jokes, like hanging a log cabin quilt on the wall and then hanging things like a Coca-Cola thermometer and a matzo box wrapper on the quilt.

How does Susan manage to keep the apartment from looking out of control? Of course, to some people it is irredeemably out of control already, with such a profusion of objects. But there is an underlying sense of order. Despite the lack of

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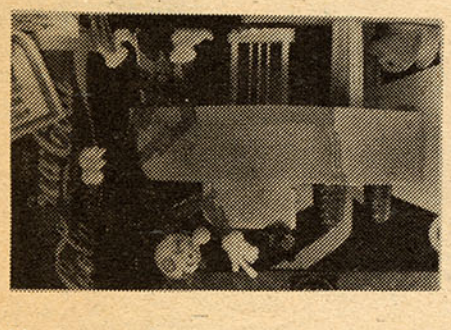

(Above right) Susan retrieved these photos from a neglected pile in her grandparents' house. They show 3 generations of ancestors: center, her great-grandparents from White Russia; to their right, their daughter who came to this country; lower left, their granddaughter, Susan's mother.

(Above) A general view of the living room.

(Below) In this tiny tableau on the kitchen shelf, Reddi Kilowatt takes his bows in front of a toy grand piano.

big pieces or furniture, the rooms are visually anchored by large textiles hung on the walls: a Turkish kilim, a wool patchwork quilt, an Afghan dress, a 27-foot woven tent-wrapping hung like a wallpaper frieze around the top of a room. Interesting textures and a good deal of subdued red accents give the room a warm, rich look that's casual and comfortable.

Susan tries to keep actual everyday clutter to a minimum, so in her apartment there are no books piled on tables, no heaps of mail on the desk, no cartons in corners. She spends more time cleaning house than most people. Though she very seldom throws anything away, she does remove to the attic those relics of periods she's passed out of, such as plastic fruit and most of her 1920's advertising art.

As a collector, a scavenger and an archaeologist, Susan Wineberg has a great interest in and attachment to things—quite possibly, she thinks, because her parents didn't. They got rid of most of their old living and dining room furniture when they spent $10,000 redoing those rooms and stuck to their decorator's advice in every detail. However, Susan's grandmother, an immigrant from Russia, can show you a table and tell where she bought it in 1913 and how much she spent for it. "They used to have more respect for things and for the hard work they represented," Susan says. Susan's parents, like many second generation Americans, directed their energy toward keeping up with the latest fashions. Now Susan's mother looks to her unconventional daughter as something of a trend-setter and studies her apartment for portents of coming fashions. Today, unmatched dishes . . . tomorrow, restaurant china, perhaps?

Two years ago artist-photographer Rita Dibert heard about Susan's apartment and photographed it. The resulting hand-tinted still-life photos have been popular successes at the summer art fair and the Union Gallery. But compared to Susan's apartment today, they look sparse—so many things have been added. Wildly luxuriant plants, more plates, boxes, and dolls, unusual full-size and miniature shoes, interesting postage stamp cancellations

Can there be too much? Susan doubts it. In a minimalist interior, less might be more, but Susan's house is a different genre of art altogether. For Susan, more is better, richer, deeper, with more possibilities for little jokes and interesting contrasts.

FAVORITE SOURCES: first and foremost, The Treasure Mart. Susan checks it out weekly at least, preferably on Monday or Friday evening when it's less crowded. For old things: rummage sales, particularly Zonta and Hadassah; also an occasional antique shop. (Their pricing is never 100% predictable, so you shouldn't be scared off by prices that seem too high, she says. You could still find a bargain.) For new toys, dolls, and tiny figures: Kiddieland (where she found Nancy and Sluggo dolls), Baobab, The Peaceable Kingdom. For packages: grocery stores, especially import stores in ethnic neighborhoods. Many of Susan's best packages have come from shops and cafes in Vienna, Austria. For cards and postcards: Middle Earth. •

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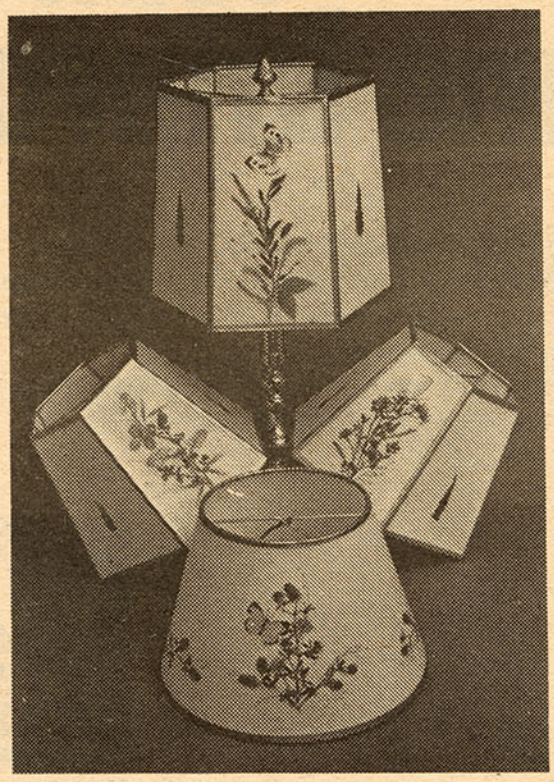

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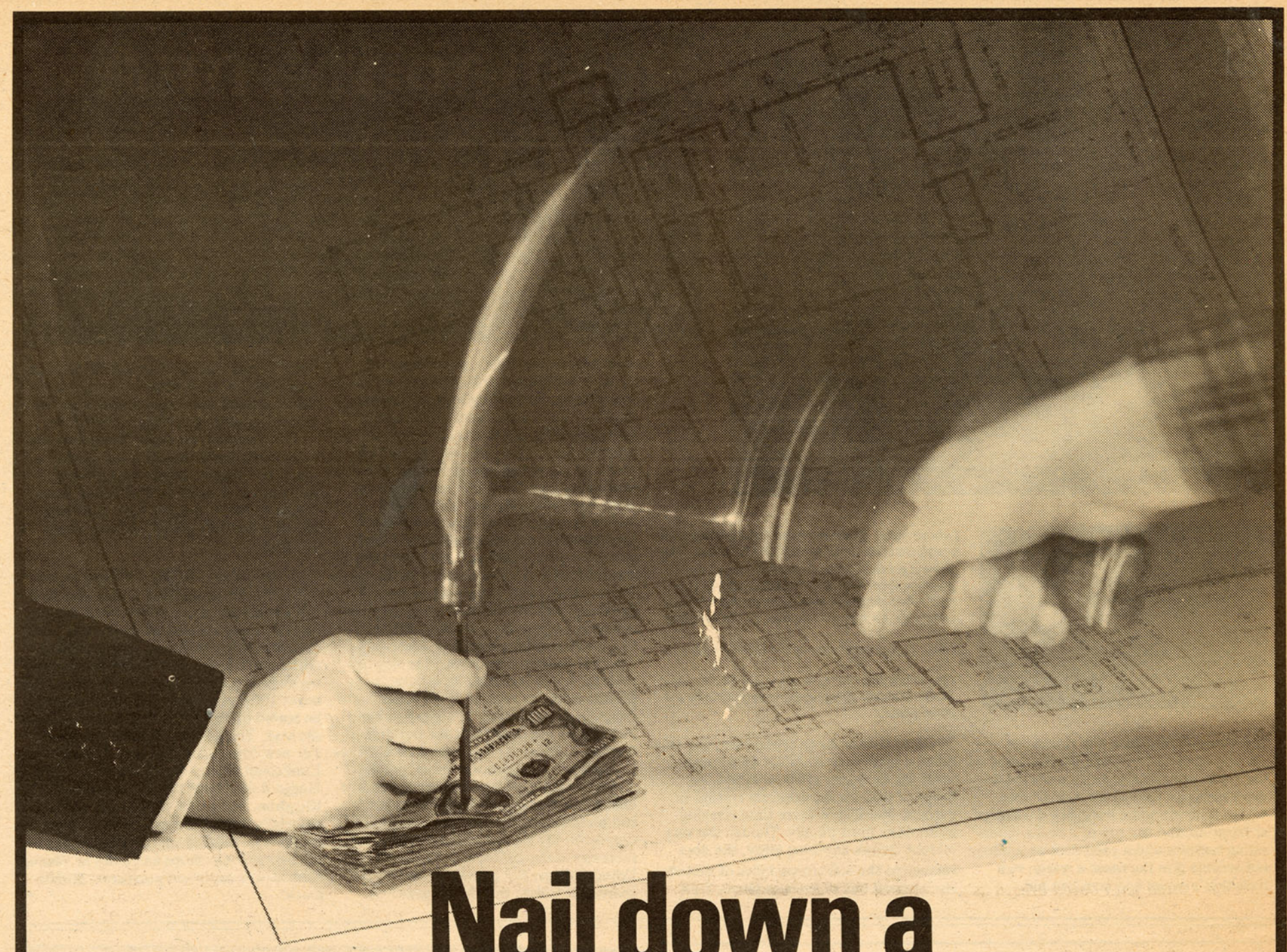

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Local History

May, 1934: The Pretzel Bell Makes Its Bow

For the fortieth birthday of the Pretzel Bell tavern in 1974, Helen Castor collected the extensive local lore and legend surrounding that popular eating and drinking establishment. Her husband, Clint Castor Senior, had taken over the P Bell in 1945, and her son Clint Castor, Junior runs it today.

The Pretzel Bell's spiritual ancestor in the days of the all-male saloon was the fabled "Joe's"—Joe Parker's College Saloon, a popular hangout favored especially by athletes and student leaders. Mrs. Castor described Joe's heyday in the May, 1977 Ann Arbor Observer. *We pick up the story now and introduce the Pretzel Bell itself. Mrs. Castor tells us that in 1934 the P Bell was an innovation for Ann Arbor, a place where college students of both sexes actually went and drank beer together—legally! The town waited with bated breath as opening night drew near. Would the daring experiment work out?—Could students drink beer without upsetting local standards of propriety? We'll soon find out. . . .*

Middle-aged grads at their 15th reunion? Guess again! It's the staff of the Michigan Daily, class of 1936, out for a break at the Pretzel Bell. John Neelands, the tavern's owner-manager back then, looks on. At the right is Tom Keene, a Detroit Free Press editor today.

When the sale of wine and beer was legalized by local ordinance on February 19, 1934, two native Ann Arbor brothers, both former U. of M. students, began collaborating on a new restaurant.

John Neelands graduated from the Law School with the class of 1911. Later he and Branch Rickey (a former baseball coach at Michigan and later to be one of the most innovative and controversial figures in the history of organized baseball), tried their hands at law together in Boise, Idaho, but success did not come their way. John returned to Ann Arbor and became a partner in the McLean and Neelands grocery store on State Street.

John's brother Ralph enrolled at the University in 1911 and, he reminisced, "For three years I tried to convince the Dean that I was a good student. But he thought otherwise." After serving as an officer in World War One, he worked in organizing the new Veterans of Foreign Wars.

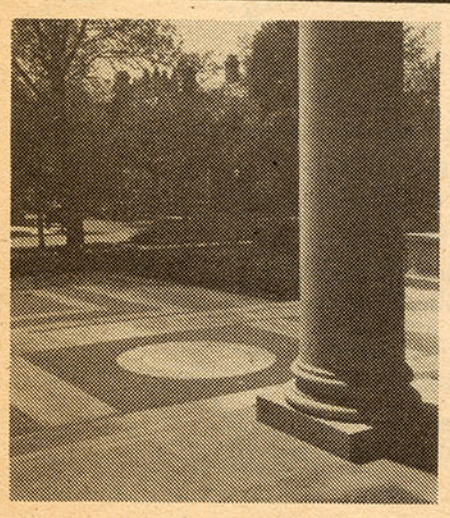
For the Neelands brothers there was no turning back to the ways of life in the saloons of their college days. Too many changes had come about in the past fifteen years. The "For Men Only" days had passed; women were not doing things in the public eye that their mothers would have felt improper a generation ago. More liberal attitudes toward social drinking had swept the nation during the time it was supposed to have been dry. People who had found beer and whiskey repulsive considered cocktails chic, and when Prohibition was lifted, the spiffy cocktail lounge had replaced the old saloons with spittoons on plain wood floors. It was clear that the new college-town places would have to be different.

The Neelands began looking for models for a new kind of college gathering place in the university cities of the old countries of Europe, where students and families gathered in the wine cellars and brewery restaurants in good taste and almost perfect harmony—places like Rothen Ochsen and Sepp'l in Heidelberg, the celebrated Hofbrauhaus in Munich, and so on.

Soon thereafter, their course of action began to take form. From these legendary cities of gemutlichkeit, (the state of loving and knowing how to enjoy oneself) they would combine their traditions—the baskets of pretzels on the tables and the bell that was rung to announce the news or signify the tapping of a new keg of beer—and call their prospective business the Pretzel Bell Tavern. They would also carry out the European style by serving a pitcher of beer from a barrel to be shared in common ownership. But they didn't want the reputation of a beer garden masquerading as a restaurant—they must also be a bona fide restaurant.

Without further ado, John and Ralph found a turn-of-the-century building vacated by Pierce Grocery Store, located two blocks west of Division street—until 1968 the dividing line between wet (downtown) and dry (campus). The large glass windows on the street side also complied with the new ordinance which stipulated that "No person having change of any premises wherein alcoholic liquors may be sold for consumption on said premises may erect or permit to be obtained any booths, shades, screens, curtains or opaque glass; nor shall any substance be allowed to accumulate on or be placed on either side of the windows which will prevent a plain and unobstructed view of the entire interior of said premise." All imbibers of alcoholic beverages, in other words, had to be clearly on view to anyone passing on the street outside!

While the Neelands were waiting for approval of their license, they started amassing those items that wou would provide nostalgia for Michigan alums and townfolk. From Joe



1929: Clements Library entrance, Law Quad

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Parker's surviving family they purchased his old drip-mark-bar and back bar cobwebbed and dusty from years in storage. From George Schaible at the Orient they were able to obtain the old carved tables as well as the chairs that were still in the back room. For the price of $100.00 the Neelands secured from Huston Brothers a large mirror, two tall chairs, exhaust fans, two cash registers, plus the extensive collection of athletic pictures. According to Ralph, "This was probably the best investment we made. I feel the pictures had a great deal of drawing power for Ann Arbor people."

Because the effects of the great Depression and "banking holiday" hung heavy, it was necessary to exercise every bit of penny-pinching possible in renovating the building. With the help of Ann Arbor contractor, Ray Daum, they salvaged from the basement some lattice work, and an area was partitioned off in the rear of the room for cooking. A work table was built to go in the middle. With the investment of $10.00 each for a refrigerated showcase, dishwasher and gas grill, their kitchen was completed. Ordinary plywood was nailed to the walls of the restaurant because it was less expensive than paint. In the basement they found an old walk-in cooler used by the grocery store, dirty and in need of repair. They shined it up and had it rewired and repaired to use for food storage.

Peter Yates

At the P. Bell today, in front of the old back bar originally purchased from Joe Parker's College Saloon: Clint Castor, Jr. and his parents Helen and Clint. Sr.

Now the Neelands could proceed with the arrangement of the furnishings they had accumulated. Perhaps to the eye of those who dropped by, the place was in shambles, but the end was in sight. John and Ralph pointed with pride to the progress of renovation.

With an investment of less than $1,000, their ideas had finally taken shape. For people going into the food service and bar business today, $1,000 may seem an incredibly small investment, but they must remember that in 1934 the Ford Motor Company was paying $4.00 per day, four days a week.

On the eve of May 29, 1934 a group of University and local people had lined the sidewalk in front of the the Pretzel Bell's entrance. It was Opening Night and, at the invitation of Ralph and John, they were awaiting the toll of the bell announcing the tapping of the first keg of beer. Joe's old bar for the third time was ready to serve its beloved Ann Arbor public.

In those moments an uneasy calm settled inside. All was well, the Neelands thought, but what about tomorrow? Could a coeducational drinking establishment succeed in Ann Arbor? They would rather have judgment withheld for a few days.

By the middle of that evening it was quite apparent the new restaurant was integrating well co-educationally. Calmly and deliberately the Neelands had seated groups of coeds, men, and couples in the large room each within the casual glance of the other, seemingly enjoying the atmosphere, talking parties and baseball and school spirit, and giving hardly a mind to their contemporaries.

The establishment was an immediate success. "The first nights, and it seemed a thousand more," relates Ralph, "we played to standing room only. It was terrific. The students took over, enjoying their beer, and

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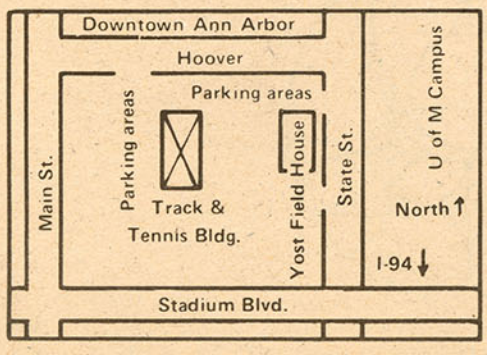

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When the Bell lost its beer and wine license for a week after unknowingly serving a minor, the management offered "the Biggest Glass of MILK in town for a dime" and jokingly planned different adtivities for each night of the week: ping-pong, tiddlywinks, and (shown here) knitting.

with rather strict supervision we let them go."

The only menu for the Pretzel Bell's lunches and dinners consisted of poster signs hung on the lattice work above the kitchen. The noon meal was 25 cents; the specialties of the house were T-Bone steak on sizzling platter for 65 cents and planked whitefish at 45 cents.

A year later, as a testimony of their restaurant endeavors, the Pretzel Bell was placed on the list "Adventures in Good Eating" by Duncan Hines.

With the successful launching of the Pretzel Bell, John Neelands devoted more time to his grocery store. Ralph now became the spirit of the Bell, and upon his shoulders rested the responsibility of providing wisdom and guidance for this social center. One thing was for sure: if he made a mistake, it would likely be a very big one.

For this reason, Ralph was the boss in the fullest extent of the word. He would decide the conduct of those who frequented the place, and he would determine what could and could not be done there. Surely everyone from employees to customers knew that.

With great determination, he set about to create an air of dignity by insisting that all male customers appear in a shirt, tie and coat for his contention was that if they dressed like gentlemen, they would act like gentlemen. In the presence of women he considered this most important. No man could sit down without removing his hat, and although this may seem a very trivial matter, it may be a surprise to know that in the early days there was much trouble over this. But a rule was a rule and those who failed to comply were escorted out the front door.

Enjoying his role as protector of the coeds and ladies, Ralph made certain they were not exposed to rough talk or vulgar language, and to set an example, he performed when possible the courtesy of seating the fair sex at the tables. He insisted that the student men escort their dates home to their sorority houses or halls ahead of University set curfew hours, and to further eliminate any alibis for getting in late, all coeds were asked to leave the Pretzel Bell one-half hour before bed-check with taxicabs ordered to speed his departing guests. On many occasions he whipped out of his pocket a dollar bill if some frugal male student thought the cost of such service beyond his means.

–Helen Castor

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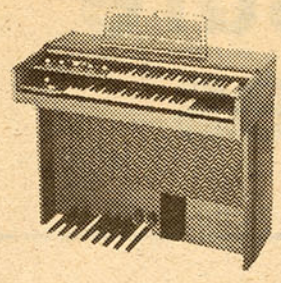

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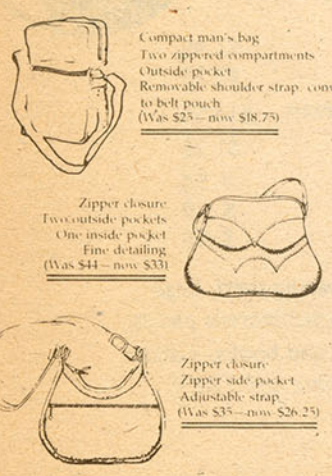

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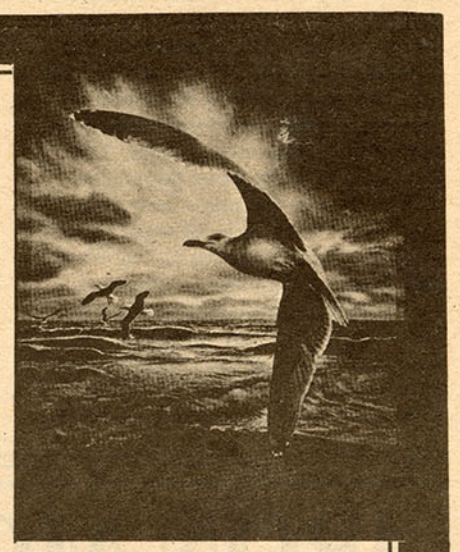

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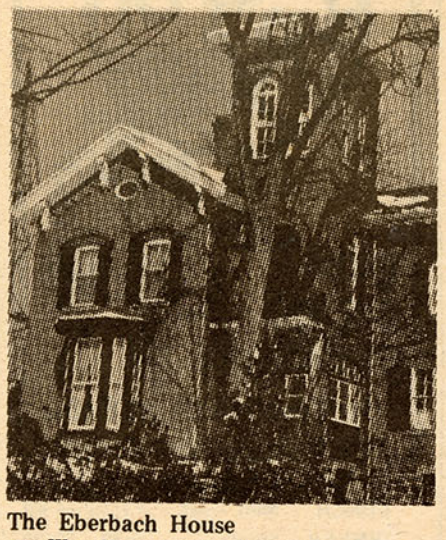
Leisure Notes

F.L. Wright House, Italian Villa on Tour



The Eberbach House on Woodlawn at Packard

Visitors can go through two architecturally unique Ann Arbor houses on this year's Ann Arbor Women's City Club Homes Tour: the city's only house designed by Frank Lloyd Wright and the city's finest Italian Villa residence.

The Italian Villa, located at 1115 Woodlawn between Olivia and Packard, was built in the 1860's by Christian Eberbach, a leading figure in pharmacy during the nineteenth century. The Italian Villa mode was a popular romantic style in the mid-nineteenth century. It features a tall square tower and an asymmetrical form. The Eberbach house was built as a suburban residence and farm about a mile from town. The front lawn originally extended to Packard; the carriage drive later became Woodlawn. The farm went back as far as where Burns Park School now stands, from Wells on the north to Granger on the south. Today the house is the home of Susan and John Etter.

The Wright house, built by William and Mary Palmer, is at 227 Orchard Hills Drive off Geddes Avenue. It wraps itself around a knobby little hill and reveals itself in stages as one approaches it. (In his later years, it is said, Wright could be more easily induced to take on a commission if the site were particularly unusual and challenging.) A sharp triangular motif, introduced in the jutting form of acute-angled walls, is repeated in the decorative detail and even the furniture, which Wright designed himself.

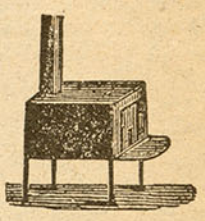
Other houses on the tour include Gilbert and Gertrude Ross's contemporary home at 3 Highland Lane, designed by David Osler in 1966; 2413 Shannondale, home of art and antique collectors Carolyne and Jerome Epstein; the luxurious Newport West condominium belonging to landscape architect Carl Johnson and his wife Janet; Claire and Jerry Hodge's house on Bending Road (featured in the article "The Tasteful Scavengers" in this issue of the Observer), and Linda and Ed Argersinger's colonial home at 3300 Park Ridge Drive.

The Home Tour is Friday, April 28 from 10 to 4. Tickets are available at selected stores for $5, or from the Women's City Club at 1830 Washtenaw. Proceeds go to help support the City Club, a private women's social organization. •

Home Show

Many of the latest products in the home furnishing and home building fields will be gathered under one roof at the first Spring Home and Builders' Show, April 14 through 16 at the U-M Track and Tennis Building. (That's between the Intramural Building on Hoover and the Yost Ice Arena on State, with parking off both Hoover and State.)

Exhibitors will display and demonstrate everything from construction basics in roofing and insulation to glamor products like outdoor hot tubs, Cuisinart food processors, and wood stoves. There will be bath and kitchen displays, talks on landscaping and interior decorating, and demonstrations of flower-arranging, ceramics, cooking, and stained glass-making, among other things. The Old Heidelberg Restaurant will serve German-American food. Door prizes include a Carribean Windjammer cruise, a $500 tool set, a Moped and a 10-speed bike. Admission is $1 for adults, $.50 for children. Times: Friday, April 14, 4-10 PM, Saturday 10-10, and Sunday 10-6.



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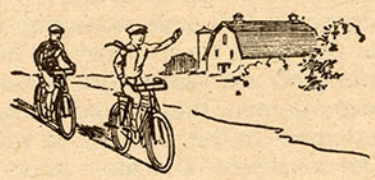
Ecology Bike-a-Thon

The eighth annual Bike-a-Thon on Sunday, May 7, is the Ecology Center's biggest money-raising event of the year. It accounts for 15% of the non-profit, non-partisan center's budget and helps pay for the center's research on environmental issues, for its environmental education projects and for maintenance of the Ecology Center temporary park on vacant land at Huron at Main.



Anybody may participate as a rider as long as he or she obtains pledges from individuals, groups, or businesses to sponser them for such-and-such a rate per mile. There's an 11-mile ride through town and a 28-mile ride to Dexter. The Ann Arbor Bicycle League and the Citizens' Band Emergency Group will help out to insure a safe ride.

The Bike-a-Thon is a good activity for youth groups, coordinator Beth Greenberg suggests. Sponsers' contributions are tax-deductable. Information brochures will be available in mid-April at the Ecology Center, 417 Detroit St., City Hall, the public library, and bike and sports shops, or call the Ecology Center at 761-3186.

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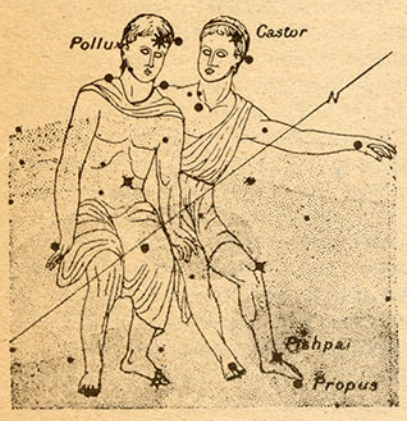
Above Ann Arbor: April, 1978

This April, all of the naked-eye planets except elusive Mercury are easily visible in the early-evening skies. On certain dates, the Moon points them out to you, one after another, so you can find them even if you don't know any constellations at all.



The Constellation Gemini.

Sun., April 9 around 8 p.m. Look low in the west for the thin crescent Moon. Below it and to the right you'll find the bright yellowish-white planet Venus, just beginning a period of almost seven months when it will be visible low in the west in the very early evening. This is the first of the April evenings mentioned above when the Moon will serve as your guide to various planets. Once you find each of the planets this way, watch from night to night as the Moon moves past them and you'll be able to see for yourself a major astronomical phenomenon: the orbital motion of the Moon around the Earth. The Moon moves a distance about equal to its own diameter (2000 miles) every hour, so by tomorrow night it will be in a noticeably different position. Only the Moon, of all celestial bodies, is so close to the Earth that its orbital motion is obvious in a single 24-hour period.

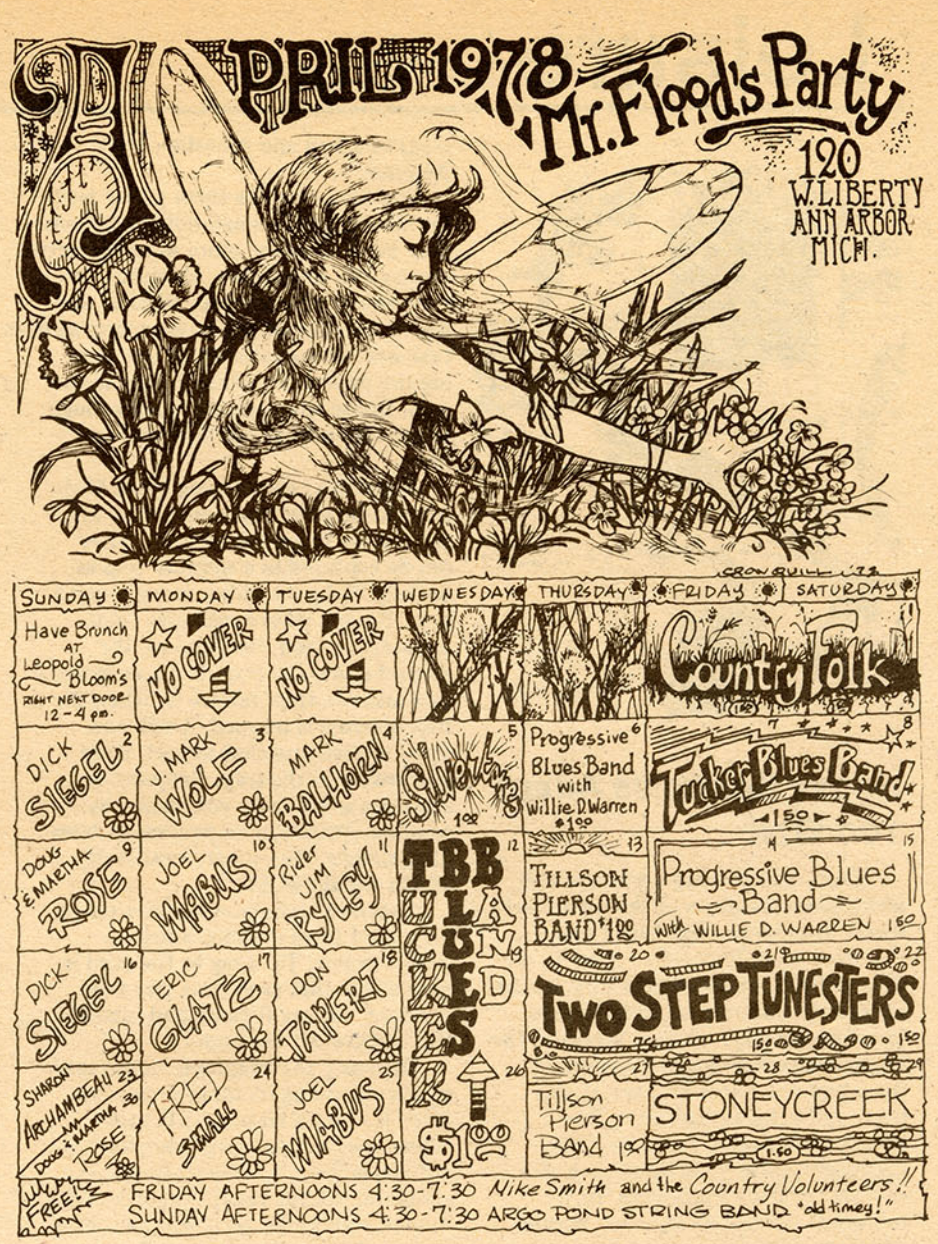
Now that you've learned where to find Venus, Jupiter, Mars, and Saturn, note that, on any given evening, all of them, plus the Moon (and the position below the west horizon where the Sun must be) form roughly a straight line. More correctly, they all fit into a narrow band, an imaginary ribbon across the sky. Well, they always do. The band across the sky where the Sun, Moon, and planets are always found is called the **Zodiac**—one of those words that everybody's heard and almost nobody knows the meaning of. Now you do!

Wed. April 12 early evening. The Moon is directly below the brilliant yellow-white planet Jupiter; it's also nearly due right of the red star Betelgeuse in the constellation Orion, which is bright, but not as much as Jupiter. **Thu. April 13 early evening,** the Moon is due left of Jupiter and directly above Betelgeuse. Once you've found Venus (see above) and Jupiter by using the Moon, you can then follow the planets themselves from night to night and see their orbital motions, which are much more subtle than the Moon's. (See entry for April 9.) If you look at the same number of minutes after Sunset (whose time is given in your local paper) every night, Venus will remain low in the west—somewhat higher each night, but always low in the west—while Jupiter comes slowly down towards it (actually an effect more of Earth's orbital motion than Jupiter's own). Finally on May 28, Jupiter will pass just below Venus as seen from Earth—and then disappear from our evening skies. Saturn will pass Venus the same way July 9:

Fri. April 14 8 p.m. The third and last of the U-M Astronomy Department's current Visitors' Night series in Auditorium B, Angell Hall. There's a lecture by David Lewis, "The Naked-Eye Sky," and the film "Jupiter, Saturn, and Mars in Motion—illustrating some of the things I've just mentioned. Telescopes will again be open if it's clear.

Sat. April 15 early evening. The Moon is directly under Mars; about the same distance to the right of Mars is the bright star Pollux, and about half that distance to the right of Pollux is the somewhat less bright star Castor. Pollux and Castor are the brightest stars in the constellation Gemini. The bright star below the Moon is Procyon, in Canis Minor. It's important to understand that these objects merely **appear** close together. They lie at very different distances from us and are nowhere near each other in real, 3-dimensional space; but they happen to lie in about the same **direction** from us.

Sun. 16 early evening. Moon about halfway between red Mars (right of it and somewhat above) and yellow Saturn (left of it). In the early evening of **Mon. 17,** the Moon forms a beautiful equilateral triangle with Saturn (above it) and the bright star Regulus in Leo (left of the Moon and a little above).



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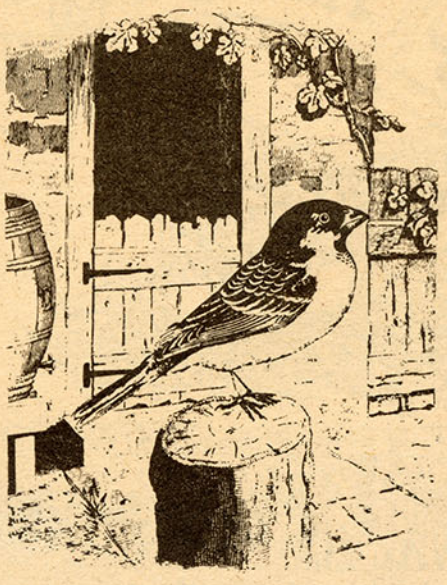


House Sparrows Adapt Too Well

House sparrows are aggressive and unwelcome members of the urban bird scene. They're an introduced species, imported from England to New York City in 1852, in hopes that they would eat certain noisome caterpillars then infesting the city. Instead, however, the house sparrow (actually a variety of finch and not a true sparrow at all) lived well off grain spilled in the streets from horses' feedbags. They multiplied quickly, because each pair of house sparrows produces three broods of young per summer. Within fifty years they had spread in every direction. Though their numbers declined when automobiles replaced hourses, the house sparrow remains abundant by eating weed and grass seeds in urban and suburban North America.

Bird lovers dislike these pushy birds for inhabiting the small-holed birdhouses they build to house more welcome native species like chickadees, bluebirds, tree swallows, purple martins, titmice, and wrens. Sometimes the house sparrows even take over houses already in use, chasing the parents away and breaking the eggs. House sparrows are small enough to squeeze into all but the smallest holes.

If sparrows are keeping other birds from using your bird house, here are some ways to get rid of them. They can be captured in a sparrow trap especially designed with a sparrow-sized hole. Place it where sparrows come regularly to feed. Put food on the ground under the trap. If a non-sparrow gets into the trap, release it. When the first sparrow is trapped, it will continue to feed and thus attract other sparrows into the trap. Release the sparrows as far from your home as possible. Traps can be purchased from Stromberg's, Pine River, Minnesota 56474 for about $14.

A second technique requires stringing a cord from the bird house to your window. Tie a rag to the cord in such a way that each time you pull the cord, the rag flips up and scares the sparrow off the house.

Currently the adaptable house sparrow is extending its range in the Brazilian jungle, of all places. It took house sparrows only six years to move 500 miles from Brazilia to Imperatriz along the Beleim-Brasilia highway after it opened in 1964. So it will only be a matter of time after the new Transamazon Highway is finished for the house sparrow to colonize the Amazon Basin!

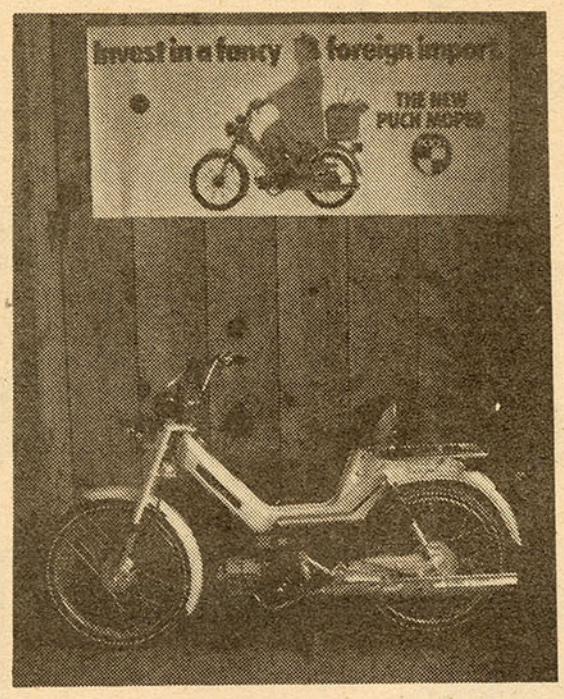
—Steven Cohen

Garden with GROW

Project Grow is the non-profit community gardening program with garden plots at ten sites around the city. This spring it is beginning what appears to be its best year ever. Enrollment so far is 15% ahead of last year. The program now has its own roomy office space in the city-owned Mary Street Polling Place at 926 Mary near the Intramural Building on Hoover. A lot next door will be used as a demonstration garden for organic gardening techniques.

This year Project Grow director Ken Nicholls has time to organize volunteers and put together a better and fuller program of gardening education. Last year he was running from one agency and governmental unit to another just trying to find funding to make up the annual deficit. Project income from gardeners' fees is always exceeded by expenses incurred in plowing plots and administering the program. Thanks to strong public support, the project is now a line item in the city's Parks and Recreation Department budget. The department contracts with Project Grow as a private non-profit organization rather than organizing a community gardening program itself.

There is still time to sign up for garden plots. The plots are typically 25 by 30 feet — more than enough space to supply vegetables for an entire family. The fee is $15 a year, with a lower rate of $5 for hardship cases. Gardeners are required to give an hour a week to help manage their garden site. Applications can be picked up at all branches of the public library, at City Hall, the Ecology Center, and the food co-ops. You can also stop by the Project Grow office at 926 Mary between 8:30 and 12:30 on weekdays. Their phone number is 994-0202. Director Nicholls invites interested gardeners to come in for free gardening literature and free seeds donated by Vitality Seed Company of Ann Arbor. •



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